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WHERE IEN HAVE WALKED

H. HENRY RHODES

The lovelight was shining through her eyes

WHERE MEN HAVE WALKED

A STORY OF THE LUCAYOS

BY

H. HENRY RHODES

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
1909

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Ships shall pass where mountains have been; fishes shall swim where men have walked and cities have flourished; for, verily, even unto the ends of the world, no other peoples shall dwell where these, my chosen, have tarried.

WHERE MEN HAVE WALKED

FOREWORD

The majority of the islands on the earth's surface lie within, or conjunctively to, the boundaries of the torrid zone. The cooling of the earth, the contraction in the frigid zones, the expansion in the torrid region may have had something to do with this. The great currents of cold water rushing from the poles and forcing out the heated waters from the equator, may have had their part in the detachment of islands, reefs and cays. Some of the islands boast of volcanic origin, the mountains of fire belching forth great masses and expiring with their vomit; others, coral; and still others alluvial.

On the south-eastern coast of the United States, the Lucayos, as the Spaniards called them, lie like numerous chains just off the coast of Florida, hugging the shore-lines, curving with the curves of the mainland; and one can only wonder if at one time in the far distant past they were not a part of the North American continent, and some terrific force,

that we have so little knowledge of, was not instrumental in detaching them again and again until islands of several square miles area to the merest needle-point on the earth's surface were formed.

In this group are cays that with their white, shifting, shining sand, or high, barren, rocky surfaces resemble chains of pearls linked together by an invisible connection; islands, covered with palms, present the appearance of an oasis when lying near others of sheer rock. Birds gather here, and nest—birds ranging from the most modest dress to those of brilliant plumage. On one side of a rocky surface one may see beautiful shells on the ocean's bed, so shallow is the water; while, on the other side, and only a few rods distant, an inverted mountain is formed which sinks nearer to the center of the earth to the depth of twelve thousand to sixteen thousand feet.

Delving and dredging have cleared channels, but the shifting foundation in times past has made even that treacherous. A vessel sailing with all speed among the islands in the water that would permit a score of ships to sail, one over the other, if such a thing were possible, with great leeway between, may run into shallow water at a moment's notice. Numerous

lights, like fireflies, glimmer among these islands from sunset till dawn, doing their utmost to guide the craft aright.

To the east of the Isle of Andros lie a number of cays and reefs. One little island that is so small it is merely a dot—without a name—presents a most formidable, rocky surface covering the island almost in its entirety; but these same high rocks enclose a cave of great extent. Many of the indolent Spaniards who came over with, and immediately after, Menendez de Aviles, tiring of the routine and hardships of settlement life, became pirates, or, rather, lived their natures, and preyed upon the laden ships that were fast coming to the new found land, and stored their goods away in this cave, where they lived, only darting out here and there to capture or sink a ship.

This state of affairs continued until the English took possession of the islands in the early part of the seventeenth century, when the cave, with its stores, was again relegated to the unknown. The island was merely avoided as a dangerous spot, and the many traditions and romances connecting it with the privateering island still unnamed, but called by the Spanish pirates Cavalero Cay. There has never been a lighthouse on Cavalero Cay, owing to its being

beyond the channel in shallower water, but numerous lights dot the islands not far distant, occasionally casting a beam on the white, jagged rocks that wink back in the darkness, well knowing they enclose more dramas enacted than all the other islands can boast of—standing guard above and about the treacherous Wind Cave.

THE AUTHOR

WHERE MEN HAVE WALKED

CHAPTER I

THE SHIPWRECK

"Hist, lad, gie me a leeft! See that auld hulk a gaein' tae pieces oot there! Sure, an' its a michty strang boat kin weather sich a gale. Look! Cover yir een like thees, me lad, or ye canna see naething." And the speaker put both hands up over his eyes, his little fingers meeting over his nose, forming a circle that was dark from the grime that covered the weather-beaten, wrinkled hands. The smooth beach stretched far out away from us, but the waves were even now piling, piling up about us. As the speaker called to me, who mysteriously appeared on the scene, his grayish eyes, seen through spectacles, showed a gloating gleam of triumph that was hateful to see. Though his tone was not harsh his dark-lined face irradiated a fiendish light. He was vainly trying to lash a boat to a rock nearby that he might load it with a variety of boxes and parcels that lay near; but the boat, as unmanage-

able and fractious as the wind that howled around the rough man's ears, would not ahoy.

I came slowly up to him, and put all my strength to the rope, now slack, now taut, and, grasping the quivering line in my hands, tied a knot, and the boat was fast—lashed to a rock. There was not much time nor opportunity for admiration, but the grizzled tar could not repress a grunt of extreme satisfaction at the strength I displayed. His tone was somewhat softened when he next spoke, if a man who has known little but harsh, rasping tones can even utter a mild word:

"Me laddie, ye done that weel. Naw, wad ye mind if ye gie an auld sailor anither leeft? Yir bones hae na weathered as mony rough gales as me ain; ye canna feel the biting winds that cut throo me auld hide; but thees auld sea-dog is gude for mony a day yet, mind ye, laddie. Dinna think that his days are noombered. Naw! auld MacFayden wi' see mony a rougher than this day be, aye ner las' nicht, either. An' where moot ye hae been on las' nicht?" The man paused only a moment to look up into my dish-blue eyes.

"I slept in the little hut farther up the island here," I said, unconscious of arousing any memories that might be slumbering in his mind.

"An' did ye git mickle sleep? or was the dreamin' all wakin'?"

His tone slightly startled me. I thought I noticed an unusual anxiety in the man's voice, but I was not the one to gratify idle curiosity by even so much as a look. "The pesky swish-swash of the ocean was my only nightmare," said I, "but the Lord knows that kept my head roaring like a blue-bottle 'gainst a window-pane all through the night." I bent forward and continued my work of lifting into the anchored boat mysterious looking packages which were arousing my curiosity more and more with each successive one deposited; but, whatever I, Walt Morris, might think, I had ever tried to cultivate a faculty of keeping my thoughts very much to myself, and solving my own problems, unless I could further an object by inquiries.

The sailor coughed harshly, cleared his throat violently, and, in his impatience, or over-anxiety, threw a small, cord-bound package into the bottom of the boat with so much force that from it fell a jewel—a lady's brooch of dull gold, but glistening with diamonds and sapphires. The gem did not escape my eyes, as I saw and noted every movement, but I wisely turned my head away before my com-

panion saw me. It was well, for in the tar's gleaming eyes was an expression that foreboded mischief to the one who became too wise. But the victim of the accident recovered himself quickly:

"An' they say, laddie, that mony a nicht Bailey's ghaist walks in front o' the cabin; aye, an' sometimes enters. He hae e'en been tae sleep in his ain bunk. But I canna tell; I hae na seen him. But they do say that meesterious soun's hae been heard, an' groans, an' cries for help, an' the cry of 'Murder, murder!' an' him a standin' there with blude streamin' frae a hole in his head. He sometimes gaes throo the whole performance, for they do say that ev'ry nicht, e'enmost, he walks, an' the same blude-curdlin' soun's that he yelled when he was killed, he speaks ev'ry nicht. But I hae na' seen 'im."

I looked earnestly at the narrator as he incoherently told his story, and formed my own conclusion.

"An' ye didna see naething?"

"Not a thing."

"An' ye wad swear tae it?"

"I most certainly would. But why are you so anxious?" I queried maliciously.

"Anxious!" cried the sailor, astonished. "I

was merely askin' ye. There's mony a one do say——"

"But I understood that no one comes to this island. That is why I came—to explore."

"Tae explore, eh? An' think ye that ye'll ever gae back tae tell 'em what ye've found? Ye spawn o' a blue-bellied whale! Ye devil fish! Ye canna hide a' the knawin' looks ye hae—not frae auld MacFayden. Naw, he hae been too lang i' the waurld tae be winked at by a suckin' bairn. Better had ye stayed on yer mither's white breast than tae hae coom in auld MacFayden's power. Ye are richt: nae one cooms tae thees island—nae one but auld MacFayden. He is king here, an' nae one kens his daeins—nae one but hissel' an' ye. But nae one wi' be ony wiser frae yer gab. Ye've gie me a leeft, but MacFayden soon forgets. He wad as soon turn an' knife ye as if ye hadna done him a gude turn. Feel me arm, sir." I felt the great, strong muscles that enveloped the bones of the sailor's arm. "Ye are strang, laddie, but ye canna rassle wi' thees auld hulk. Ye wi' na carry ony o' his secrets awa'. Look at me een!" And he removed his heavy blue glasses, disclosing eyes that were without lashes, with red lids full of tiny holes.

I instinctively shrank back in affright, causing the old man to laugh fiendishly. "Ye are unclean, laddie, frae thees time on. Ye hae touched a——"

"Leper!" I screamed as I leaped for the fiend, but the yet strong arm of the man met me half-way in the pit of the stomach, and deprived me of breath for an instant.

But the moment meant superior advantage for MacFayden, and, acting upon it, he bound my hands behind me. "Naw, wi' ye gae wi' me peaceably tae yonder ship?" He paused.

"You are a little late with your rescue, devil!" I panted. "If you meant to do them good why wait until the ship goes down?"

"Doon! Dinna ye see that rock there? The hulk is safe for a bit yet. Auld MacFayden kens these waters weel."

I glanced up querulously. There was something about his manner that I could not understand. "But what is that to the right? a lighthouse?" I asked.

"Aye, a lichthoose, lad;" and the man gave vent to loud laughter that contained little mirth. "An' I be the keeper; but nae bit o' licht dae ye see there the nicht."

I looked searchingly at him. I was beginning to comprehend. "Do you mean to say

that you extinguish the lights, and land the vessels on the rocks?"

"Exteenguish! Nay, there be nane tae exteenguish." He paused to note the effect of his words, humming a lively tune the while. "If the nicht be bonny, the ships ride by, safe as a bairn in its mither's arms, guided by the lichts o' the faithfu' watcher; but a nicht like las' when there be chance for wreck—an' booty——"

"Then the wrecks are purposely done? You devil! why has no one known this?" I screamed.

"Why? Why?" and the rocky island rang with the echo. "Ye ask why! Nae one dare coom tae interfere wi' the daeins o' the unclean."

I understood. What was there to hinder him? "Then you mean to continue your pirate's work?"

"Pirate! Ye wi' never live tae ca' me pirate twice. Ye hae ainly a choice o' twa—death or a pirate's life. I be a juist judge, but a licht-hoose keeper who harks not tae the cries o' his victims. Which wi' ye choose?"

"I will never follow you!" Hardly had the words left my lips when, with some blunt instrument, I was felled to the earth; and the

sailor lifted me into the boat, apparently as lifeless as the parcels that surrounded me.

"Ye wi' not dee, laddie," gloated the pirate. "Ye are juist what I need. Ye wi' na defy me again, but wi' be a meek an' lowly follower." He chuckled gleefully, and made his way to where my row-boat was anchored.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE

Slowly, stealthily in the early dawn, a man crept up over the side of the wrecked ship that was now fast sinking into the briny sea. The bow was far up on the shoals that infested the sea in the vicinity of the light-house, and an angry, hungry looking hole was yawning in her side, where, during the storm and the darkness of the night, she had struck against a rock. Where she was stranded on the shoals, she would have remained in comparative safety had the wind remained in the northeasterly direction from which it had blown all day and the greater part of the night; but, with the slight breaking of the clouds, giving a peep of the moon here and there, like a watchman who shows himself occasionally to convince one that he has not altogether forgotten his duties, the wind changed.

MacFayden chuckled with delight as he noticed the shifting, for the old man was only too well accustomed to the trip he was preparing to make in the early dawn—trips simi-

lar to which had brought disaster to many sinking hearts before, causing brave men and shrinking, helpless women to go down into the depths of their watery grave cursing the faithless light-house keeper whose carelessness had played them into the hands of pirates. But no one ever lived to tell the tale, and the vessels wrecked were doubtless reported, "Lost at sea," and MacFayden continued his inhuman work to gratify his greed for gold—selling his soul over and over again to the keeper of hell for money that could never do him—a leper—any good.

The appearance of a young and stalwart man had caused the pirate momentary alarm, but only too quickly he saw what use he could make of me and welcomed my coming as a miracle of Providence who had led him to a winning game all these years.

The gray dawn was breaking in the east as MacFayden made ready to shove off from shore. I was still sleeping my unnatural sleep in the bottom of the boat. I was indeed stunned by the blow and the suddenness of the act, and almost powerless to move, but I was cozening the little strength I had to use later on. My enemy looked at me, and laughed, then dampened a handkerchief in some liquid

and threw it over my drawn, white face, shutting out the expression from the smile of the waning moon. His boat was still lashed to the rock where I had thrown the rope, and, leaving me sole occupant of the loaded boat, he, with the better and lighter one, pulled away toward the sinking ship. He caroled a song befitting his mood, and, as the sound floated out over the waters to the occupants of the stranded vessel, they took courage, believing help was near.

Earnestly and intently they watched from the storm-tossed ship to see the tiny boat, guided by the lone man, now rise, now fall, now lost to sight altogether. Occasionally, swift-flying black clouds sped across the horizon, shutting off entirely their view. An occasional call from a drowning man, or a scream from a heart-broken woman, reached the boatman, and beneath his heavy blue goggles I could imagine his fiendish look. His heart, if he possessed one, doubtless leaped beneath his scarred bosom as he pictured to himself the surprise on each face as they learned the mission of their rescuer.

As a wave washed over the boat, dashing the cutting salt spray in his face, he muttered a curse, and that was all. Each day he took

his life in his hands—a life that was worthless; each day it was returned with many-fold value, it seemed to him. He knew the fear of a loathsome disease that nothing but death itself can rid one of. He knew that his commands would be obeyed through fear of the "unclean." His piratical work had always been a little task, and now, as he clambered up over the ship's side, clinging fast to the rigging, from near the stern, that he might take the watchers unawares, he crept stealthily, like a wild beast discovering prey, up over the side that was almost sunk in the ocean's depths. He removed his goggles. He put his cap in his pocket, and, as he crept along, one sight of him was enough to make one choose death rather than contact with him.

The watchers had lost sight of him altogether as the last, huge wave swept over his boat, and they now were despairing unto death. They now knew that all hope of rescue was gone—they were doomed to a grave in the bottom of the sea, the cold salt waves their shroud that would wash about them, crawl in and out among their locks, lick their faces with the affection of a lap-dog, caress and close their eyes, as the fondest mother might do, again gurgle over them with as much fiendish delight

as a serpent would have, slimy and cold among the seaweeds, stared at by the fishes, prey for all reptiles. Their bodies had little chance of rising, as cross currents washed around these rocks, and a whirlpool in the depths of the ocean, whose outlet no man knew, kept the bodies from rising to the surface. MacFayden was certain that he alone knew this. Everything seemed arranged to suit his diabolical plans. He knew that no one would discover the wreck, and, further, no one would know he had ever shirked his duty, for at daylight every morning the light burned brightly. He was safe, for who seeks contact with a leper?

The vessel contained only a few passengers, as it was used more for lifeless cargo than for human freight. The ones so soon doomed to death were laboring folk—laborers and their wives and children, with the ship's crew. As MacFayden crept noiselessly along the deck, varied sights met the gaze of his browless eyes. Here and there a woman with a babe at her breast, another clinging to her skirts, was crooning to the sleepless children, and muttering a prayer to the Father who seems ever near the mother. Some were sitting rocking and swaying their bodies back and forth, with a heart-breaking despair depicted on their faces

—faces from which all hope had died, and were now resigned to whatever came. Rough-spoken but kindly husbands bent over their wives, smoothing the confused, spray-washed hair, and trying to console them.

"Never ye fear, Janet, I'll tak care o' ye an' the bairn," one was saying.

"But is there no hope of rescue? Must we all die like rats in a trap?" was the wife's questioning answer as she crooned softly to her babe, looking up into her good man's eyes with confidence and hope that he, stronger and braver, might reveal some method by which they could avoid the watery grave.

"There's naething," he said. "The auld signs hae coom tae pass—the rats themsel' hae left us; but what for, the poor cusses! They'll ainly droon juist as we all wi' dae, an' that soon." Tears were streaming down his face. His wife sobbed, and her babe, wrapped in a thin shawl, caught the mood by instinct, and wailed pitifully. The other two children hovered nearer to their parents, and the mother stretched the shawl to cover all three.

The man walked back and forth restlessly. "She's sinkin' fast," he said. "A few meenits more an' we'll all be oonder."

Heart-rending shrieks went up from women

and children near. The man and his little family paid no particular attention, for such shrieks were periodical ever since they had struck on the rock. The ship lurched backward, and they all could feel her keel grate on the shoals.

"God help us!" shrieked a chorus of voices.

"Call on the ocean to give up our dead!" suggested a bass voice.

"Is there no help?" screamed one after another.

"The only boat we had was washed from the deck when we first went down," said a calm, steady voice that all knew was that of the faithful captain. "Keep up yer spirits. It's no time for a panic. Man the pumps and work as ye never worked before!" All the men rushed to the assistance of the captain, followed by the anxious, despairing eyes of the women, and the wails of the children. Back the ship slid from the shoals and the water poured in anew. Further assistance was useless. There was no hope!

"No hope!" was murmured and shrieked from one to the other, and the men came back to their weeping wives and little ones.

"Let's jump!" yelled one, and "Let's jump!" was echoed throughout the whole ship.

"Fools, keep yer heads!" cried the captain. "Pray if ye can, ye women! Pray long and loud! Maybe—yer God'll save ye—if the rats have left us." A chorus of voices rose to their Maker in petition—humbly worded—demands more strongly stated. Seemingly, these people were not, as a whole, religious, but the women apparently held religion in highest esteem, and, as always, their devotion to what they believed to be right, reflected on their husbands who were the better for living in an atmosphere of Christianity. There were others who were of the devil, being born for him, seemingly, whom no one, not even an angel from Paradise, could tame and soften. But they, doubtless, were not to blame; pre-natal influences had wielded their scepter over the unborn babes, and had destined them to a lifelong struggle with evil.

"Sing something!" suggested one woman, and they struck up the great hymn of consolation, "Nearer My God to Thee." Some sang in strong, steady voices, others broke down, sobbing, and clasping their babes tighter to them.

All at once the song ended by a most unearthly shriek, and a listener could not tell whether it emanated from the ship's crew and

passengers, or the leper who then appeared, or both. Men and women alike fled to one corner of the vessel, as the leper, with hands outstretched, came toward them, crying out in sepulchral tones, "Unclean, unclean!" They all saw and understood. Though they were so near death, they preferred the embrace of the ocean, and a sleep on the pebbly bottom, to contact with this loathsome creature.

The captain alone stood firm. "Not a step nearer, devil, or, damn you——" and he clenched his fists threateningly.

But MacFayden appeared not to heed the remonstrance, and came further forward, crying, "Unclean, unclean!"

The captain picked up a heavy piece of iron and threw it at him, but missed his aim. MacFayden sprang forward, and, with catlike agility, bound the captain with ropes from the broken rigging. Some of the men made a movement, but terror, mingled with the pleading of their wives, kept them back.

The monster went to the lower deck, and, selecting with experienced eye, packages that he knew contained valuables, brought them to the upper deck. Three trips he quickly made, but on the last he again confronted the captain whom the men had unbound. Some of

the men, too, had come to their leader's assistance, but the fear of a leper almost counterbalanced their strength, and the captain was left almost entirely alone to battle with the enemy.

The two grappled and struggled in each other's embrace. Occasionally, "Unclean!" rose on the air. Each moment the vessel was sliding farther off the rocks; each moment it was sinking farther into the unknown depths. But the two struggled on. MacFayden would have had the best of the struggle if the captain had been alone, but the will and strength of every man, woman and child aboard seemed imparted to him.

"Clean or unclean, you damnable wretch, go to the devil from whence you come!" And, with superhuman strength, the captain threw his opponent from him, seemingly for a moment's rest before the finale. The women screamed, and one, with a child in each arm, terror-stricken, for the moment a maniac, jumped overboard. The waters gurgled as if in welcome, and closed over them. The husband, crazed, sprang to the edge of the vessel, but seeing she was gone from view, turned his attention to the one who had separated his loved ones from him. He sprang toward the

leper, and he and the captain lifted the struggling pirate in their arms and with curses threw him overboard, squirming, twisting into the brine.

"May ye lose yer life as many times as ye've taken the lives of others!" said the captain, too full of loathing for the demon to realize the peculiarity of the curse.

"Damn his soul in hell!" said another.

"May all the imps torture him!"

"May all the saints pour down showers of curses on his head!"

"May the Holy Mother desert him!" cried a woman who, kneeling, with her rosary in her hands, was devotedly praying.

"Curse him! curse him!" passed from one to the other.

"My God, men, we're lost!" and with the captain's words all looked to the ship which was now almost gone. A heavy gale was blowing, and the vessel was far off the shoals.

"Lord, hae mercy oopon us!"

"O God, receive us!"

"O Blessed Virgin, hear our prayer!"

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me!" said another ardent Catholic.

Some of the men stood stolidly by—silent.

The captain tried to utter words of consolation, but failed.

"Still all my song shall be," sang out a sweet, feminine voice, joined by others. "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

"Nearer, my God, to Thee," sobbed a little woman to her babe, breaking down and covering its face with kisses, "Nearer to Thee."

"O Lord, be merciful!" "Thy will be done!" "Nearer to Thee." And the ocean holds one more wreck in its embrace—a score more of lives. But wilt thou, O ocean, be held accountable for what was forced into thy protection? Methinks thou art more as a mother, waiting with open arms for all children that are sent to her—maternal, caressing, protecting—not an enemy, but a friend—hiding away as best thou can the crime of others.

CHAPTER III

RESURRECTED

As if in answer to the captain's curse as he threw the leprous pirate overboard, old MacFayden, after a fierce struggle with the tossing waves and the endeavor to swim beyond the motion of the sinking vessel, by using more strength than he had ever before manifested, no doubt, sank. When he arose, he was semi-unconscious, and floated, rather than swam, to where he had fastened his boat; beyond the rocks that had so cruelly taken the lives of so many human beings; beyond the waves created by the ship with only bow afloat; beyond the suction of the waters as the vessel now sank out of sight.

It required some little time for the pirate to recover himself entirely, but he seemed in no hurry. He grinned as he heard the singing and prayers of the drowning men, women and children; but he frowned fiercely when he thought of his purposeless trip, of the rare booty that he had lost, that would now rust

and corrode and sink farther into the ocean's bed. He knew by the appearance of the packages that gold in plenty was contained therein, and for that gold, yea, even one piece of the bright and shining metal he cared more than for all the lives he had been the means of cutting short, or for the curses that had ever been heaped upon him.

But he grinned. His heart was rougher and more weather-beaten even than his wrinkled, bronzed face—harder than adamant—more impenetrable than any metal—perfectly deaf to all entreaties and kindnesses—encased in self. And what a self! But MacFayden laughed. He muttered. He congratulated himself on the goodness of Providence. He felt that he had won the game again, and would forever keep on winning. There was nothing to be fearful of—nothing to account for in after life—for there was no God—no Hereafter—else why would God not hear and heed the drowning victims?

He brushed his forehead roughly, as if putting away such scenes once and for all. But they did not disturb him greatly. Never a tender emotion—never a regret—never a cringing of conscience! He dipped his hands—rough, horny hands like claws of a wild

beast, unusually drawn and shrinking from the slow progress of the loathsome disease—he dipped them in the surf, and bathed his forehead, the salt creeping into the cut on the side of his head where he had struck on a broken mast when precipitated into the ocean, causing him to squirm, giving him more physical pain than he had, doubtless, ever experienced mental. Again he cursed the luck that prevented his obtaining the booty to add to the store he had safe in the boat with its supposed sleeping occupant.

For some time longer he sat and mused; but he was quick enough to see that the waters were quieting, and it would require less effort to row to shore. As the ship went down, the wind, as if in sympathy, calmed its wild blasts that had howled about the rigging in a dirge-like sound, making the ship-wrecked crew wail louder as the mournful sounds reached their ears. A seagull flapped its wings, and, uttering its peculiar, mournful cry, flew near to the lone creature sitting motionless on the rocks. It flew quite near, then away again, but it could not leave for long. It came back again, and yet again, and peered with its large eyes into the man's face, poised carefully, then loudly uttered its sad notes. The persistent

actions of the innocent bird enraged the man. He picked up a large stick that had been washed upon the rocks, and watched his opportunity to throw. Again the bird came near, but it only enraged him more, for it did not come close enough for him to hit it.

He rose to his feet, and swore furiously. His head throbbed, but he did not mind that. He made ready to push away for shore when, just as he stepped to his boat, three lifeless forms, a woman with a babe clasped tight in each arm floated up to him, with their wide-open, staring, glassy eyes, making a mute appeal to Heaven, coming to mock and taunt him with his deed. Gradually, nearer they came to where his boat was fastened, rising and falling with the motion of the waves.

MacFayden was terror-stricken. He could kill with seeming delight, but he was too much of a coward to gaze unflinchingly on his dead victims. He took an oar and shoved the bodies away, but, stubbornly, they, like the seagull, returned. He tried again, but they arose and floated toward him, their matted hair lying close to white cheeks, the water gurgling in and out of their open mouths. He could not succeed in keeping them away, so determined to shove off and leave the gruesome things for

the reptiles to devour. But, as he jumped into the boat, one end of it lowered, and by some trick of Fate, the bodies were thrown across the lowered end, the woman still holding fast to her babes.

With a shriek of horror, MacFayden leaped ashore, grabbing the anchor rope as he did so. A mournful sound thrilled him through and through, and he looked to see if the woman and her children had come to life, and were calling down curses on his head. No! it was the seagull flying close again, and apparently endeavoring to perform the last rites, chanting funeral notes for the dead.

"Damn ye, ye devil's spawn! Ye'll na mock auld MacFayden longer. Chant yer auld deerge all ye want, but ye'll hae nae funeral here. Ye devil! I'll bury 'em deep thees time, an' ye canna teel wha's dune it. Fly aroond all ye want!" he screamed, boiling with hatred and rage. "I'll feex ye, too, if ye coom a bit closer. Coom along, fiend! coom along, devil! coom closer an' ye'll see what MacFayden wi' dae wi' ye!" Seizing the bodies, with his horror for the moment overcome, he bound them fast together, and then tied them to a rock that he could barely lift, pushed them over the boat's side, and they sank to rise no more.

With a chuckle, he again leaped into his boat, adjusted his oars, and pushed away, occasionally giving a backward glance toward where the grim objects had sunk out of sight, fearful lest they might in some uncanny way again rise and pursue him. But his fears were not for long. He rowed onward, unmindful of the salt spray that dashed so angrily in his face, even so soon almost forgetful of the drowning victims; but, doubtless, he did not forget the rich booty he had lost. But cares weighed lightly on his shoulders, and as he rowed back to the shore that he had left so early in the dawn, he sang wildly and with reckless abandon:

They who gae to sea in a ship
Must ever look for a downward slip
Intae the ocean's slimy bed—
The grave that ne'er gives oop her dead;
The grave that ne'er gives oop her dead.

A shudder passed over his gaunt frame, but he sang on, even more harshly than before:

But what care we who safely lie
On the barren rocks baith high an' dry,
We who've been favored o' Prov'dence most,

Care not for the dead off a rock-bound coast,
Care not for the dead——

"Ah, ha! what's thees me auld een see?" and he plied himself to his oars with renewed vigor. "The sea has gi' oop her dead, an' Gehenna itsel'—— What means it? What means it?" And the light boat skimmed along over the restless waters with feverish activity, almost keeping pace with the seagull that flew high above, its white wings showing all the whiter against the blue of the sky, occasionally dipping down into the surf, then raising itself and uttering its mournful cry, but ever flying in the direction the leper was going. But MacFayden neither saw nor heeded the bird. His thoughts were blacker than the yawning mouth of Gehenna.

CHAPTER IV

WALT MORRIS

Hardly had MacFayden launched his boat on the rough sea, ere I, his victim whom he had left for dead, or so nearly so that he thought I could not recover for many hours, opened my eyes, and tried to comprehend my condition. I loosed my hands—an easy matter as my enemy had too hurriedly tied the knot—and pushed aside the rag that covered my face. I lay thus for some moments ere I dared to move, lest the pirate had not yet started on his trip, and, his anger aroused anew, he would give me the final blow which I was yet too weak to resist. I felt by the motion of the boat that it was still anchored, and I ventured to raise my head slightly and saw the large rock to which I had lashed it. I knew not how long I had been unconscious, but I saw and recognized my assailant's strategy to keep me so.

But for once the pirate was foiled. Youth, vigor and an enduring constitution favored me; and Nature helped to resist the effect of

the blow and drug. My experience showed me that I must be extremely cautious to compete with my enemy who now had me almost wholly in his power. But I was of an adventurous spirit, and things promised to gratify my desire for peril and adventure. The former I had just experienced; the latter would follow. My head felt heavy and feverish, but I lay quiet. I heard nothing of MacFayden; therefore, guessed that he must be making his inhuman journey. I was hardly conscious enough to realize the condition of the unfortunates on the sinking ship, but gradually I comprehended, and I determined to rise, unload the heavy tug in which I lay, and go to their rescue. But as I made the attempt to sit up, everything turned black before me, and I fell back again.

When I next awoke, the moon was shining dimly through swift-flying clouds, with just a peep of azure, and the rays of the rising sun were visible. But the clouds seemed heavy to me, and the sun's rays far away. I managed to rub my eyes vigorously, and feeling stronger, I pulled myself to the boat's side, and reaching over, felt the water. It was refreshing to the touch, and I swung my arm back and forth, splashing the spray upon me.

I lifted my hand to my forehead, and cooled my feverish temples. I ran my fingers through my hair, and, little by little, moistened my head and face. I found a wound on the back of my head which rebelled against the briny water, and I permitted the matted hair to remain a covering.

With frequent rests, I managed to sit erect, and, as I did so, I was surprised that I could hear every word from the stranded vessel. The wind and water both favored me. I could hear much better than see, but I aided my vision by my powerful field glasses that were my constant companion; and I found that not a movement on the vessel escaped me. As I fully comprehended the crime of the faithless light-house keeper, I longed to go to the unfortunates, and rescue them. But I could hardly move; I could only look and stare, horrified yet fascinated. I could only be a witness of a great and revolting crime that was beyond my power to avert. Every word, prayer and heart-cry were heard.

Across the roar of the ocean, the shrieks and cries and songs of the ship's victims came, for, now as I looked, the vessel gave a lurch backward, then forward, and, like a great and mighty animal, wounded mortally, it groaned

and creaked, then sank out of sight. My heart almost sank within me, and I was overcome with sympathy for the ones whom I could not put forth a hand to save.

The scene was almost too much, but I looked as long as a mast or sail was visible, then threw from me my field glasses, as if they were in any way at fault. I cursed the pirate. I cursed the ones who had given the inhuman wretch the position of light-house keeper. I cursed the ones who kept him there, and the air vibrated with curses on the ones who were too cowardly to investigate the doings of the keeper—not brave enough to face a leper and determine at the leper's hands the fate of so many vessels. But I did not realize that the wrecks were invisible from the mainland. I did not realize that they knew nothing of the vessels passing that way, as many were driven out of their course and stranded on the rocks, and not a victim ever lived to tell the tale.

"Damn him! damn him!" I exclaimed again and again, as new thoughts, more wrathful than their predecessors, came into my mind. Doubtless my anger had more to do with restoring me to perfect consciousness than anything else could have done. It was like kindling a fire in an oil-tank; each drop of the fuel

consumed added greater heat until the whole mass was in a combustible state, ready to explode with intensity, darting flames hither and thither like flashes of blinding lightning.

"May his black soul languish in the hell that was created for such as he! and may the demons not have pity! God, what a brute! what a brute! Why has this been going on? Surely he is Satan himself, for no devil could be more inhuman, more unmerciful!" I shook my head vehemently. "I could kill him! kill him! Yes, rocks, take up the echo, if you will, 'Kill him! kill him!' Hear it echo in the distance, bounding from one ragged rock to another, until the whole island cries out, 'Kill him!' It's an unjust thing that no victims ever rise from the depths to taunt him. God!" and I clenched my hands tightly, my whole body shaking with rage.

"Blast his damnable life!" I continued in my fury. "No, I'll not kill him; I want no stain of blood on my hands. They may not be entirely pure, but, God knows that no man's blood has ever stained them, nor ever will, unless—No, I won't," I said emphatically, as though some one were urging me on to commit murder. "If there's ever a judgment day I won't have the deed of murder held up against me.

Ha! there the demon is now. Curse him!" And I grasped the glasses that I had thrown from me. "I wish the waves would open and swallow him. But no such good luck. He's like a cork; he'd float; you couldn't keep him under. He's added some more blood to his hands, and more hell to his heart. How can I meet him face to face, and not call upon him to atone for his villainy? But I will not. I *will not,* do you hear? Now, keep away, will you, and let me alone. I'll try strategy with the old cuss, for I'm going to see where he hides his booty. I'm glad he got none from his latest victims. Though he's always come out ahead, it seems, he can't get away from the leech that clings to him day and night. Sooner or later he'll have to give in, and everyone will laugh as he goes to his grave unwept. The very sprites of the sea and air will laugh and mock him, and taunt him with the deeds of the past. Bah! I hope his old bones will bleach in the sun, picked at by vultures, himself the worst vulture of all."

I put my glasses aside in the pocket of my coat, climbed quickly into the stern of the boat, and sat there. I did not want the old man to see me moving too actively, for he doubtless thought to find me as he left me.

Hardly had I taken my seat, when the notes of a song came over the water. I recognized the pirate's voice. He was singing! "The scoundrel!" and I leaped to my feet again, ready to face the murderer, but I controlled myself by force, and sat down. A new side of his nature was revealed to me that made his former deeds seem white in comparison. Singing was only for joy; and could a murderer so far forget the cries of his victims as to sing on his return?

I calmed myself, for the song had ceased, and every moment brought the pirate nearer the island, for the boat shot over the water like an arrow, as if possessed of supernatural power. Every moment brought us nearer each other, and I had the hardest struggle of my life to control my wrath. The foolish, innocent expression my face quickly assumed was not in keeping with the tumult that raged within, but which, by sheer force of will, was each instant becoming calmer. I whittled constantly on a stick, swinging my feet like an idle boy, humming a silly child-like ditty.

But my heart gave a great bound, as if arousing me to self-defense, as the pirate anchored his boat, leaped from it like a madman, and rushed toward me, with his brawny

arm upheld high in the air, his hand clutching a ragged, heavy club. I wanted to jump at him, throttle him, and throw the leprous body into the sea, as the monster came nearer, nearer, his face livid with rage, muttering curses thick and fast.

But I whittled on, humming merrily, with no apparent concern; but my gun lay suspiciously near my right hand.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW BORN FOOL

When within a few feet of me, MacFayden stopped. As he gazed at me, little by little the anger died from his face, the terrible vengeance he intended to wreak gave place to a feeling that each moment grew more exultant as he contemplated how merciful Providence had again played into his hands. He stared long and earnestly at the unkempt figure, at the boyish expression on the young giant idly whittling a stick, and humming a tune as innocent as a babe would coo.

A realization of what had been done for him flashed over MacFayden. His hand was stayed, the club dropped by his side, and he laughed. He laughed long and loud. His laugh was as fiendish, though, as his mood of a few moments before. He clapped his hands to his sides, threw his head far back, and one peal of laughter quickly followed another as he noted the figure before him, now more surely in his power, more truly his tool than he could, otherwise, ever have hoped me to be;

for my athletic frame had appeared as a serious problem to him. But now—"Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!" And the rocks and caverns echoed his mirth, sounding fainter and farther away until each tiny rock took up the echo like the ripple of a stream, "Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!"

"Gude God! Fate hae servit me a turn thees time!" And he crept slowly up and looked into my face, and saw that light of reason and understanding had fled, for my expression was that of one who by Nature had been deprived of the power of thought and comprehension, or one so elementary that none was possible. (A rather uncanny, unforgivable trick I was wont to practise at school, until it became a serious question with my instructors whether or not I was safe outside an asylum for individuals afflicted with pericerebritis). Despite the tumult that was waging within me, I swung my feet back and forth, occasionally looking into the leper's face with as remote comprehension as it would have been possible to assume.

O, the world is full of joy
For a little, guileless boy

rang out as merrily as though it had been the

song of the happiest bird. As I sang, I looked direct into MacFayden's face, and saw there less of demonism than I had before noticed, less than I had ever expected to see. I showed no sign of the masterful control I was exerting over myself, but merely the appearance of a care-free, idle, happy boy.

For some unaccountable reason, nature had endowed me with a good voice. It was melodious and voluminous. I could sing even the simplest ditty with power and grandeur, with the finishing touches, I had been told, that art gives. I had always been a musician in a way. Like many another boy, I could fashion a whistle from the willows and play upon it as though it were a flute. I could imitate the calls of the birds. All my resources I mentally enumerated, and, as occasion demanded, I would bring them to bear on my undesirable companion.

"I played better than I kent," said the pirate.

I did not appear to comprehend his meaning, but repeated the words:

I played better than I kent,
And there's naught but mischief meant.

MacFayden glanced quickly at me, but my expression assured him that it was merely a freak—a result of the drug and blow—for not a gleam of intelligence was shown in my face. "Aye, they canna fool auld MacFayden after a' these years; they canna fool him; for, with a' they say he's done, he always cooms oot on top. He has the best o' it so far; he wi' e'er hae the best, for it's a strang and wily one that can heender the auld licht-hoose keeper. The Goover'ment trusts the lichts tae him; they never coom tae see aboot them. Why can not an auld man enjoy hissel' a wee bit as he likes? An' noo I haf the best o' a'—a strang-limbed, young laddie who wi' be a michty help. Maybe auld MacFayden canna leeft as weel as he once did; an' maybe he can. But what's one tae the ither? I haf a helper noo—one who is strang, and one I can manage as I could a bairn. Ha! I nefer kent a blaw tae be as effective. I nefer kent me 'wash' tae dae thees trick afore. But he's better than dead. He's better than dead, for I want nae mair ghaists a hauntin' o' the island. I want nae mair dead bodies that dinna sink tae the whirlpool, but rises an' points a reproachin' finger at me. I dinna want——"

We dinna want what we canna get
Sae there's nae bit a use to whine an' fret,

repeated the whittler, but my eyes never left my stick. I seemed bent on completing the stripes that I was at that moment forming by peeling or leaving the bark intact to suit my fancy.

"Fool, a fool! I've got a fool!" exclaimed the leper in exultant tones. "A fool!" he screamed, and the words vibrated over the waters. "A fool for me pleasure. But bein' a fool need not take the strength frae his arms. Ha, I'm rich, I'm rich! A helper—a fool——"

A fool, a fool, you have, you knave!
A fool to follow you to the grave.

MacFayden chuckled, then shuddered. "Ye speak brave, fool! But ye may not glue yersel' tae auld MacFayden, an' he teel ye not."

Tell me to, or tell me not,
I'll follow you to the grave;
But not a tear from me, I wot,
And ne'er a hand to save.

"Ha, ha! Ye'll sing me dirge, will ye?

Weel, mak it quick an' lifely, for I was nefer slow in lifin', an' wants naething slow in deeing."

You've lived quick, you'll die quick,
And down in the ocean deep
You'll find your bed where slime is thick,
And loathsome reptiles creep,
And watch you in your sleep.

I threw all the sweetness possible into my voice, yet tinctured it with a tinge of sadness as I repeated the words, almost expressionless, as though I were reading them by rote, that my tone softened somewhat the face of the leper, and he lowered his raised hand.

With a quickly dawning realization of the magnanimous favor Fate had done him, MacFayden sat down upon a rock near, and again laughed—a prolonged, resounding, echoing, demoniacal laugh. He laughed as a fiend might have done, as he saw a long-hoped for, but long-delayed victim only too surely in his grasp. He laughed as one resting before a feast that had long been desired, keen in the anticipation of the coming delights, eager to pounce upon, but anxious to prolong. "Weel, mony things may not hae favored me the day,

but mickle joy thees gies me auld hert," he said, half to himself, as he regained his speech. He glanced calmly at me, his face all grinning.

He was not smiling, for fiends cannot smile. They grin, they laugh, but never smile. Smiles may flit over the angelic face of an infant, causing one to think that Heaven is close, very close; that the babe itself is full of heaven and heavenly things. But when hell has entirely filled one's being, when all one's thoughts and cravings, all one's actions and desires are of hell, then no smile ever crosses that one's face. He grins like any other ogre or loathsome monster, fiend or devil; but never smiles.

I paid little or no attention to my enemy, but I secretly realized that my power now was supreme. I knew by the expression on his face that he firmly believed in the foolishness of the "fool" before him. I sang, and my voice now was like that of some Swiss maiden singing among her beloved Alps, vibrating through the valleys, redounding from hill to hill, clear as a bell in tone:

"I looked up into the azure sky,"—Here I clasped my hands and gazed heavenward, with all the simplicity of a child——

And saw a white dove mounting high;
Its wings glowed in the morning sun,
Gold-tipped, like finest metal spun;
A brilliant sheen about its breast
Afforded for the head a rest.
Resplendent beauty in its eye,
As far and farther in the sky
It rose. The portals opened wide,
Then closed. The white dove was inside.

MacFayden stood like one fascinated, but I shifted slightly, and sang a Norse diver's song:

Ye, ho! wild men of the sea,
Of the sea,
Come o'er, wild men, come to me,
Come to me;
I'll show you a trick of the waters blue,
I'll show you a trick that is new to you;
Come down in the waters with me so deep,
I'll show you where bright-haired mermaids sleep.
Come to me,
O'er the sea.

Ye, ho! wild men of the sea,
Of the sea,
We'll go, wild men, where there'll be,

Where there'll be
Jewels in caskets and treasures rare,
Fair beauties now covered with sea-matted hair;
We'll take with us combs and brushes fine,
And dress the locks of maidens divine.
List to me,
O'er the sea.

Ye, ho! wild men, list to me,
List to me,
If you'll go, wild men, down with me,
Down with me,
You'll find there the wealth of vessels due;
We'll be rich as kings, and richer, too;
The riches are ours in the ocean bed,
We can choose as we will from the ocean's dead.
Come with me,
Down with me.

MacFayden sprang to his feet. "It's high time to quiet ye an' shut yer head, or I'll feex ye so it 'll nefer open mair. I'll send ye doon tae the bottom o' the ocean, an' let ye find what ye will. I hanna time tae be leestenin' tae yer blab. Git oot o' me boat, an' we 'ill strappit the ither on behind."

He was not quick enough to put me out by force, for I jumped over on the sandy beach as lithely as a fawn.

MacFayden watched me, and half admired my activity. "It 'ill suit me purpose weel—suit it weel. Hoot, lad! coom back. Coom here at once!" he screamed, as I lightly skipped away to where some willows grew near the bank.

But hardly had MacFayden called, ere the willows were cut, and the "fool" was on his way back. As I ran, I fashioned a whistle. With this whistle I could so well imitate the call of the thrush that one could almost see the little brown feathered creature, hear him calling to his mate in his sweetest tones; could almost see the dark woods, moist with recent rains, and green with vegetation; could see the leafy trees, the green vines growing over bushes hanging with red and amber berries, or embracing some sturdy tree whose loosened bark afforded a desirable resting-place for the delicate, clinging tendrils. I seemed to hear and understand and imitate the little singer; then, as quickly I would change to the whip-poorwill, and one could hear every mournful note of the twilight entertainer.

Seeing MacFayden spell-bound, I clapped

the whistle in my pocket, threw the willows in the boat, and said, in a sing-song tone:

I have no wish to idle be;
There's work in plenty for such as me;
Honest toil and labor I never shirk,
But whate'er it may be, I can work.

"I'm truly glad ye be not sich a fool as I thocht ye. Be a fool an' ye like; ye canna please me better than by bein' one. But there's nobbit a use o' bein' a bigger fool than ye haf tae. I'll gie ye wark a plenty, if it's wark ye want. But want it or not, ye 'ill hae it. Coom, an' we 'ill hitch thees boat on tae ither."

I obeyed as dutifully as a child, and worked with so much rapidity that I had tied one boat to another before MacFayden had had an opportunity to assist, then, jumping into my own boat, followed by the leper, I pushed away from shore, singing.

CHAPTER VI

A TOILSOME DAY

I was the happiest when on the bosom of the great boundless ocean, wrestling with the mad waves in a tiny shell of a boat. I loved to watch the spray dash higher and higher, note the sea-gulls that flew low and, dipping their silvery wings in the surf, with their heart-rending cries fly upward again, gathering in flocks and calling to one another, their notes sounding far over the sea, reaching others of their kind, who hurried near to join in the fray; occasionally darting down to lift a fish that, dead or dying, was floating on the surface. I rejoiced in the mad scene as a true son of the sea would do, and was almost wild with delight as I saw the storm clouds gathering black above us. The wild winds of the night resumed their fury with cyclonic intensity as the clouds grew blacker and blacker.

I tugged at the oars, endeavoring to steer the boat as the pirate directed, but the waves were rolling high, the white-caps piled up about us, the calls of the gulls grew louder,

and the boat with its companion lashed on behind was hard to manage.

The pirate watched the blackening horizon at first with only a languid interest. The strong breeze was sweet to him; the lashing of the waters, music in his ears. He put out his hand caressingly on the waves, but they, as if maddened by the leprous touch, surged against the boat, dashing the briny spray in his face. But, as cloud after cloud, each darker than its predecessor, rose from out of the sea, and encompassed the sky, meeting in the center, and the wind blew a terrific gale, his actions became uneasy. He sniffed the breeze, like an animal that detects the coming storm and flees before it. He put out one hand and accurately timed the wind. He cast his browless eyes upward where not a patch of blue was to be seen. Far out over the waters, he heard the mad roar of the tide and the oncoming storm.

Great drops began to fall—one, two, then countless others. The heavens themselves seemed rent asunder, while flashes of lightning gave glimpses of the brightness beyond. The thunder roared like the onward march of heavy cavalry. The lightening became more intense, terrible and blinding.

The heavens themselves seemed rent asunder

MacFayden, who had weathered many a gale, evidently had not experienced one more severe than this. He fell to and bailed out the water as fast as he could. He looked eagerly toward the boat behind that was laden with the cargo so dear to him. It was heavy and strong, and the cargo safe, for it was riding the waves like a bird, while the smaller and lighter boat, though riding equally as well, was tossed about like a cork.

I dared not leave off from the oars a moment to assist in bailing out the water that was gradually rising about our legs. The pirate redoubled his energies and worked as for life; and for life it was. The canvas-covered boat behind us held nothing but dead cargo, and held it well. Like a black bird, it rose and fell with each wave as complacently as though the sea were calm and the sky blue.

I was almost faint from thirst, and, as the first large drops of rain fell, I opened my mouth wide and drank them in like a chick. Great, cool, refreshing, splendid drops of rain, that, though a part of the ocean around, gave me strength as no ocean water could do. I drank until my thirst was satisfied, then, smacking my lips with the keen delight of a child, I pulled harder than before at the oars

that had never left my hands. I sang long and loud, and my song made a curious blending with the peals of thunder, the flashes of lightning, the wild screams of the birds, the rending of some rock by the electrical forces, or the blasting of a tree on the shore that sounded frightfully near. The music sounded all the sweeter in contrast with the storm, it giving the accompaniment to the harmonious minor strains. I seemed to derive my inspiration from the mighty demonstrations of Nature, and sang until even the pirate was moved to almost worship of the source, forgetting, for the moment, the blinding tempest, our extreme danger, our unavoidable death, apparently, in the ocean's embrace, listening to the song of his oarsman.

"Great God! a rock! a rock, lad! Look tae yer oars! Steer tae the richt! Steer tae the richt, laddie! Bend tae yer oars! Harder! harder! Pull! My God, pull, lad, pull!"

With only a glance at the pale, drawn face of the pirate, I bent to my oars, and pulled. I knew not what danger was ahead, but obeyed as implicitly as though I, too, felt a little of the emotion that surged through the man before me, reflecting on his face, as he crouched there, almost breathless, quivering, shivering with his

fright. The merciless play of the elements had wrought upon him, and now the extra fright had caused him, heretofore so emotionless, to quake with fear. Did he fear to find a grave in the bottom of the sea where he had sent so many victims? Did he see again the forms of the three who had haunted him in the morning? His glasses were off. He swayed to and fro with the motion of the boat, as though to assist in keeping it from the rocks.

Rocks there were; and, just as I, with superhuman effort, pulled away to the right to avoid one huge rock, a counter force sent us against another. The pirate's face became even whiter, and he cursed himself for not remembering that these rocks existed here. But for a purpose of his own he had ordered me to steer a little out of the usual course, and he had encountered these rocks for his pains.

"Pull, lad, pull! Bend yersel'! Pull hard! A wee bit mair tae the left noo! Steady—pull! Blast the wind! Ah, the hellish spray! It blinds me. Noo, steady, steady! Keep pace wi' the waves. Ower, ower! Noo!" And MacFayden, going through every movement that he had suggested, sat still, dripping with sweat.

The rain had ceased except an occasional drop to show that the elements could yet be

merciless if they tried. The boat was washed partly over the rocks, grated, then stopped. I pulled hard, but I could not budge it. I had been almost exhausted from my unusual effort, but here we were—stuck fast on a rock—and a mile from shore!

MacFayden cursed, then stepped forward to take a turn at the oars; but he well knew that if my superior strength could not accomplish the result, it were little use for him to try. Just as he made a forward movement, the boat lurched with the tide, and threw him sprawling on the rock, face downward. He groaned, but with lightning activity, jumped into the boat again just as it was leaving the rocks, the action of the waters accomplishing what we could not, evidently belittling our strength. I heard a snap as the boat left the rocks, and, glancing quickly to the stern, saw that the second boat with its precious cargo was loose, and was drifting away.

"God! God! God!" MacFayden screamed, speaking with wonderful familiarity the name of the Being of whom he knew nothing—whose principles seemed altogether foreign to his nature. "Look, lad! Wad ye let me whole cargo get awa frae me? Wad ye treat an auld mon like that? Auld MacFayden's leembs hae

little ta dae wi' carryin' him the day. Canna ye see they shake oonder him? Leap, lad, leap! An ye can swim, ye can quickly save me jewels. Leap, lad! Fool, hear me? Why not leap? Jump an' save me siller!" And he turned fiercely on me.

But my face portrayed none of the excitement that the pirate felt; for, in truth, I felt none. I looked simply at the fleeing boat in child-like wonderment; but inwardly I was not as a child. I knew that to a great degree I had the leper at my mercy, for he would rather lose his life than his cargo. Every moment the boat was drifting farther and farther away, now rising, now falling, with the motion of the turbulent waves, now washed shoreward, now seaward, but creeping, creeping away, adding to the distance between us.

MacFayden saw that his only salvation was in enlisting me on his side. He saw that force would not move me, for force linked in battle with force, would find him the loser. He implored; he entreated and prayed. "Lad, lad!" he wailed, "will ye nae lend a hand? Wi' ye let me treasures slipit awa frae me like that? Wi' ye nae help an auld mon wha nefer dune ye a harm——"

You may forget, but I do not,
The harm you done me once,
And now I do your bid, I wot
I am a sorry dunce.

My eyes were almost fish-like in their expression, but I made an effort to repress the intelligent twinkle that persisted in manifesting itself.

"Fool, fool! ye wasna hurt. That is past; let it gae; but for the love of God, jump an' save me boat! Save me boat—or kill me!"

Kill you I would, and if I dare,
But o'er all the seas and lands,
You cannot find one here nor there
Whose blood is on my hands.

"Shut yer damned trap, ye fool!" and MacFayden raised a hand to strike me, but, instead of cowering under the rage of the demon, I stepped forward with a menacing air, and the pirate, afraid of nothing heretofore but the day's storm, cowed in submission, and sank back into his seat.

Instead of tragedy, we were presented with comedy, and I laughed. My mirth was as wild as my song had been.

"Hae ye nae mercy, lad?" screamed the excited man, impossible to keep still. "Hae ye nae mercy?"

What are ye, to speak to me
Of mercy, ye foul knave!
But ask of those whose shrouds ye chose,
Who lie in an ocean grave;
Ask with loud voice; ye gave no choice
To live or yet to die,
To those who sank to burial dank,
Where fish and seaweeds lie.

"Forget! forget, lad! But help me! help me! God, help me! Lad, jump! Leap intae the ocean, an' fetch me me cargo. Ye are strang; ye can swim. Leap, lad, leap!" He stood and wrung his hands in direst agony. I could have laughed heartily at his distress.

And if I help, what will you give?
What treasure from your store?
For where these go there mayhap be
A thousand million more.

"Ye are richt, lad; ye're richt. Though it breaks me hert tae pairt wi ane o' them, I gladly gie ye a precious jewel wi' ye but res-

cue the boat. See, it leaves us! It's gaein' far!"

For one lone jewel I'll not take
My life now in my hands,
But if you no better offer make,
I'll heed not your demands;
Your treasures be, not I mistake,
As many as the sands.

"I hae mony jewels, mony, lad. But wad ye rob me o' ane? They be as precious to me een as an ain bairn." I looked up as if to reply, but MacFayden continued: "The best in the Wind Cave ye 'ill hae, but ask nae mair than ane o' me. Ane is py, gude py."

Your good pay, then, you'll keep,
For I stay here,
And have my bonnie little sleep,
And dream good cheer.

Hardly had I sat down, when MacFayden's shrill voice again rang out: "Half me jewels in the Wind Cave ye may hae—half me treasure. But haste, or ye hae not a ane—not a ane! Quick, lad, quick! A half! a half, ye'll hae! But nae mickle siller 'ill aither hae an' ye be not quick."

All thy treasures in the Wind Cave I'll take,
The fairest in the Wind Cave is my stake;
All of thy vast treasures are mine,
If I rescue this cargo of thine.

Do you grant me all treasure that's hid
In the depths of the Wind Cave——

"Aye, lad, all," he interrupted, and, without another word, I removed my outer apparel and leaped into the bosom of the rolling, surging angry waters, while my enemy laughed fiendishly, and chuckled: "Aye, lad, all, all! Ye 'ill nae live tae see ane—— Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!"

CHAPTER VII

A TURN OF THE TIDE

"Ah, ha! It's as I thocht: he 'ill nefer live tae see a treasure—not ane—except the mony in the ocean's bed," the pirate chuckled. "'Tis weel—'tis weel! Fool though he was, he wad hae gie me trooble, for he's strang—he's strang an' bony, an'—bonnie, like me ain Scotch. But, alack! that I should lose a' me treasures. Better had I gone mysel'. Curse thees auld limbs for tremblin' oonder me afore their time! Curse sich weakness in a mon not yet three scoor an' ten! What affrichted me I dinna ken. I hae been in storms, fearfu' storms—an' heard the wind whistle an' seen the rain fa' mony a time before; but was nefer fearfu'. Curse the auld stiffs that wad rise afore me an' mak' me bury them anew. Curse 'em! curse 'em!" he shrieked. "'Tis e'en enow tae mak' ony strang mon shake; 'tis a sicht na seaman crafes for dessert. Why could they not hae stayed in the weeds an' slime? Ah, me! See hoo I tremble e'en noo, as though the shakes had set a hauld! I hate the sicht. It

isna pleasant tae see. When ane is aince killed, why canna they stay killed, an' not coom tae me tae be killed again? What's that?" And he looked around nervously. "Fool I be mysel'. I be the fool. 'Tis na the lad that has joined the mony below an' mayhap noo lies sleepin' on the sands; but 'tis mysel'! Stark crazy I be, if I canna put the ghaists frae me mind—ghaists on the island—ghaists on the rocks—ghaists risin' frae the sea—ghaists in the birds—ghaists efrywhere! 'Tis a ghaistly waurld.

"Ah, ha! Look! Me treasure still rides, but it acts queer. It bobs oop an' doon like a cairk. It doesna ride smooth, an' the storm is maist past. Weel, weel, weel! Prov'dence again is wi' me. I'm a lucky dog. Na fool I be! Prov'dence dinna helps a fool, or else the lad wadna hae drooned. But I thocht the boat wad hae sailed awa; but, look! it passes an' floats like a bird beyont! Mayhap the wind hae changed. Na, it still cooms frae the nor'-east. I'll awa an' follow, an' fetch me cargo tae land. An' I'll na share wi' the lad in his ocean grave. Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis gude! 'tis gude!"

But row with what strength he would, he could not catch the canvas-covered boat that

floated gently, but steadily and swiftly, too, farther and farther from him. He strained at the oars until the great vein in his forehead swelled like a whipcord; his muscles were tense and taut; but the wind was against him, his strength was not in his favor, and he made little progress.

"Damn the boat! An were it nicht, I wadna follow the ghaistly thing, for it acts mickle like 'twas propellit by wraiths, for the wind mauna be for it nae mair than me; yet it floats, floats, and I swear, swear, but canna catch it. It heads for the point yonder. I dinna care if it 'ill ainly stop when there; an' me cursed arms an' back 'ill servit me weel."

The pirate bent to his oars and for a few moments no curses fell from his lips, the while making noticeable progress; but when he again looked up, no boat was in sight. He looked in every direction, but nothing was visible. "If it hasna roonded the head, auld MacFayden 'ill na tarry the nicht, for it 'ill be wi' ghaists that he dweels. An' the sun wasna sae bricht, I should e'en noo return tae the keeping o' the licht-hoose. I am fresh, for I hae na rowed the day. But I'll awa, an look tae the roondin o' the head. An it be na there——" The sentence was broken by the

murmur of the waves, and what he would have said was mingled with oaths and mutterings and dark curses.

But it was the treasure he regretted, and, after a few moments' hard pulling, he, himself, was rounding the head; and there, to his great delight, he saw the black canvas boat safe and sound, fastened to a crannie in the rocks. As yet, he had not so much as suspected the truth of the boat's propelling power, and now landed as quickly as possible to again lash the boat, with its precious burden, to the one he had occupied; but before his astonished gaze, I stepped, almost entirely recovered in the few moments' rest, from the energy expended in my feat of strength.

MacFayden stepped back, horrified. "Be ye ghaist, or flesh an' blude?"

"More of flesh and blood than you are, pirate! What flesh and blood I have are clean, and that's more than you can say." There was the same voice, the same boyish face, but the simple, silly, child-like expression had given place to one of fair intelligence. The marvelous change in me startled my enemy, for he had, heretofore, firmly believed that his combined blows had destroyed my intellect and rendered me an obedient imbecile. But not

so. A change had been wrought, and the pirate was quick to notice it. He was defenceless. The surprise had thrown him off his guard, and he must now conjure his wits to assist him. I was no longer the foolish rhymer, but a strong antagonist, with whose strength the leper could not hope to compete; and, furthermore, the boat load of rare jewels and gold was on the side of strength. He had thought to deprive me of any reward whatever, if I lived in the dangerous sea. He was glad to make promises to obtain the rescue of his boat, but not so overjoyed to fulfil. But now I could dictate; he would have to obey.

His anger rose to a white heat, and the uncovered eyes flashed demoniacal light—as nearly so as leprous eyes could do. He was weak from the effort expended in reaching his treasure; and now to find it guarded by one of flesh and blood! The leper started forward. He stopped, then retraced his steps. Again he made a forward movement, but something in my eye, it might have been the peculiar white and red scintillations that betokened a change—and danger—but whatever it was, he instinctively felt that it was best to be cautious.

Cautious! It was easy for him to be cautious. Like the snake that glides noiselessly

up to its victim, which it strikes unawares, knowing that a betrayal of its coming would mean defense, just so was the leprous pirate. Caution was natural as to the snake, but, like the snake, it was born of fear. Evidently, MacFayden knew something of fear, as the events of the day showed, and for which he cursed himself almost continually, knowing that I, though fool that I was, had witnessed his cowardly actions, and knew that they emanated from so slight a cause.

But the thought that I had only pretended being what I was not, MacFayden had not yet coined, apparently believing me to be too straightforward to act a part. He laid the transformation to the good heavy club and to the effective drug. But I, too, had long ago learned from a friendly Indian to concoct this selfsame drug, which is fatal in small quantities, but, like many another poison that is used for medicine, it is both harmless and beneficial when taken in large quantities. It is made from an herb that clings to the otherwise barren rocks on many of the Lucayos—an herb easily detected and recognized by its foliage, being green on top of the leaf, while the under side is a dark red, shading to crimson, scarlet, vermilion and amber, and which contains in

the bright colors, properties that, rightly brewed, and inhaled in very small quantities, would mean death to a stronger man than myself. But in learning to make the drug, which was done merely through curiosity, I also learned its antidote—tobacco—the nicotine nullifying any fatal effects by inducing nausea, and vomiting as a result.

But perhaps MacFayden had not wished to kill me. He felt that he needed me, for he noticed daily his failing strength. He had entire possession of the island to which he thought no sane man would venture, and he had thought me so securely in his power. But now! with the plunge in the flood, the tables had turned, and he, MacFayden the pirate, was cowed. He thought (uncanny struggle though it might be, but less so as the sun still shone brightly, for the clouds had dispersed like a veil from before the face of the sun) to struggle with a wraith; and, knowing such things to be composed of penetrable matter, if matter at all, he felt that the contest would be an unequal one and an undisputed victory for him. He would be in possession of his treasure again that Providence—gracious helper—had so miraculously saved for him. But I was guarding the cargo, and guarding

it so well that MacFayden, the pirate, MacFayden, the leper, the fearless "Unclean" dared not approach too near.

"An' what, pray, be ye gaein tae dae wi' me stuff? 'Tis but a sarry bit, me lad."

"Is it?" I said contemptuously. "If so, why did you row so far and so fast for it? Why did you promise me so much if I would but rescue it?"

MacFayden's face was a puzzle. He now began to comprehend that I had been playing him a trick; but he was slow to submit. "I wad gae ony where tae rescue a boat that has carried me auld bones mony an mony's the time. Lad, I hae becoom fond o' the boat, like a mither o' her bairn."

"Great Cæsar!" I interrupted with vehemence, "you talk of something of which you know nothing. What can you, a pirate, a destroyer of women, a separator of mothers and babes, know of a mother's love? Say no more of such sacred things, or I'll pounce upon you and crush you as I would an eggshell. You demon! Hell is too good for you. Talk of that which you know. Talk of the lives you have taken, of the hearts you have broken, of the curses heaped upon you, only a thousandth part of what you deserved; talk of your vic-

tims, of brave men, innocent, defenceless women, clasping in their arms their babes; talk of those that now lie in the bottom of the sea, caressed by the waters, fanned by the fins of the fishes; think of all these things, pirate, then look at your boat-load of treasures and see if each one of the magnificent jewels will outweigh the soul sent to its God in the getting! Stay! Don't you dare move, you scum of the stagnant waters! you murderer! you robber! you damned leper!"

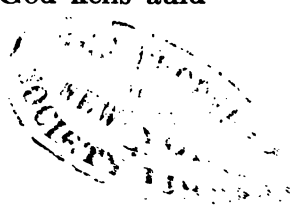
My voice was high and loud as I drew closer and closer to the quaking man, towering above him like a giant. "Talk not of a mother's love! God grant that your mother may never know of the devil she bore—of the viper that was given to the world in her labor! God grant that she had no hand in making you what you are! God grant, for the sake of all mothers, that she was not a demon before you! You accursed wretch! I could crush you with my foot as I would a worm, laughing as I ground out your life, and send you to meet the All-Wise Judge. May He in His wisdom, bring you to account for each heart-cry you have wrung from others! May He cause you to writhe in agony for each and every soul you have sent to its early home! God grant it,

and He will—He will, you viper! Better spend the remainder of your days in bitter remorse, for maybe, every penitential tear shed will make your punishment less severe; but, if that be true, I pray that your eyes may be dry —dry—and burning—and bright—not a tear —not a drop of moisture—until death closes them, until death glazes them over like the eye of a dead fish, sightless and glassy.

"You fiend! you've had your way; now my time is come. You made me promises you never meant to keep. I rescued your boat, which contains valuable gems: I stand guard over it until you show me the Wind Cave and its jewels. Then I myself will choose whether or not I prefer them to these. To the Wind Cave, sir! I have danced to your piping long enough. To the Wind Cave!"

MacFayden saw that his cause was lost, unless—unless he could gain time, and, with time, strength. He saw that he must fulfil his promise——

" 'Tis far tae the Wind Cave, lad. We canna reach it the nicht. We maun bide here awhile. We baith maun hae rest, an' when the mornin' dawns, lad, despite yer curses that didna fa' on deaf ears, but on a deaf hert, we 'ill gae for the Wind Cave. God kens auld



MacFayden isna sae bad as ye peectur him; an' for yer curses, lad, he dinna cares a mite. Ye hae ainly wasted breath that micht hae been better spent. But auld MacFayden is forgeevin', an' he 'ill, wi' mornin' licht, show ye the Wind Cave an' its jewels; an' when ye possess them, lad, ye 'ill then ken that, pirate though ye ca' me, I haf honor. I keepit me promises, an' 'ill see the Wind Cave an' possess its treasures. Stand guard ower the boat, lad; it is kind o' ye, though thees auld mon kens it haulds but a sarry bit. Ye 'ill be rich, an' I 'ill be poor—sae poor! Yer riches 'ill be gained frae me labors, but auld MacFayden is forgeevin'—an' honest—an' nae pirate—nae robber—*nae murderer*," here a pause, "but a true licht-hoose keeper, an' whose licht 'ill nae shine the nicht; but the goover'ment 'ill na ken, an dinna cares—a poor, forgeevin', honest licht-hoose keeper."

CHAPTER VIII

TO THE WIND CAVE

The hours of the night were long to me, who, enjoying the best of health, was ever glad to embrace Nature's restorative—sleep. The exertions of the long, hard day, the terrific wind, the loud claps of thunder, all tended to make me drowsy; but, fearful lest my enemy might break his trust, and steal away in the night, I stubbornly refused to submit to the drowsiness that was gradually settling down over and around me, like a blanket that would dull my senses to the visible world and shroud me into dreamland. My wet garments had been dried by a fire made in the shelter of a rock. I felt very comfortable as I nestled closer against the hard rocks that seemed feather-like to me in the borderland of repose. The sea was calm now, and peaceful, belying the fury that had raged over it during the day.

MacFayden must doubtless be sleeping, as I could see him clearly from where I sat, and he was silent as the rocks around. I could not trust him, and I needs must be watchful. Lest

he might sneak away in the night, I had carefully lashed both boats together, and, to make escape doubly impossible, had fastened them to a rock hard by, and within sight and touch at all times. The pirate had submitted to my plans with suavity of manner, but not without a peculiar, ill-tokening gleam in his eyes that I did not fail to notice; but he had lain down by his own fire, and now apparently slept soundly.

The moon had risen, and was making lights and shadows on the water wherein one could picture phantom shapes and faces, figures fanciful and grotesque, scenes that had transpired, or were yet in the future. She lightly kissed a little ripple on the face of the ocean, as a maiden coy might press her lips for a moment to the brow of her lover; frowned on the shadows, coquettish and maidenly, as the clouds now veiled her face, but smiled as they again parted and permitted her full sweet beauty to reflect on the bosom of the mighty ocean who seemed beckoning for her to come to him from her heights above. Trees, like great giants, cast their shadows in the water, each leaf rustling with the faint breeze like the whisper of woodland nymphs. Rocks, bald-faced, were exposed to the moon's fitful smiles

or, here and there where no beam penetrated, they appeared as openings to gloomy, dark caverns that led to the very bowels of the earth.

Gazing on the placid scene, watching the two boats rise and fall with the motion of the water as it lapped up on the beach at my feet, with just the faintest murmur that produced monotony and drowsiness, I fell asleep. It was but a moment, it seemed to me, but I awoke with a start, and before I realized what I was doing, I was standing upright, and several feet away. Consciousness came with the waking, and there, above me on the rock, with a thin-bladed knife that glistened in the light of the moon, was the leper. He was grinning, as though assured he had accomplished his purpose. I realized all in an instant, and, turning, made for the would-be murderer.

"Ah, ha, old man! you would have added one more to your list, would you?" and I hauled him from the rock. He fought with the strength of a madman, and stabbed at me again and again. We clinched; we wrestled. Now one had the mastery, now the other. MacFayden threw me, and was ready to plunge the knife into my breast, but I warded off the blow, and sent the knife tingling over the rocks.

"The ghaists keepit ye!" screamed the pirate, as he tried to tighten his fingers on my throat; but I, with all the strength I could summon, arose, my assailant clinging to me like a leech. With a bear-like hug, I encircled him. Tighter and tighter I drew my arms, until he began to weaken. He was loath, however, to submit and used every muscle in defense. But youth and vigor were in my favor, and, with an oath, MacFayden became limp in my embrace. I took advantage of the momentary relaxation, and, lifting my enemy, I threw him from me, as I would a loathsome burden, with a curse that almost burnt my lips in its terrible intensity.

The limp body struck in the water, and, for a moment, rose and fell with the waves, seemingly lifeless. But the water proved refreshing, and little by little he came to; and looking around him, he crawled out on the pebbly beach. I watched him earnestly, saw the glitter of his eyes, and stepped forward and picked up the knife just as he had reached for it. It felt sticky, and looked amber in the moonlight. I touched the blade, and felt blood! Intuitively, I put my hand to my shoulder, where I had felt a tingling pain before, but had passed it from my mind, and found that

blood was flowing freely from a wound in my back. A shudder passed over me as I noted how near to the spinal cord the knife had entered.

MacFayden, dripping wet, watched my every movement, and when he saw me shudder, weak as he was, he burst into a loud, fiendish laugh that sounded all the more fiendish in the night. A bird, startled out of its sleep, flew over us, uttering a peculiar frightened cry; then another, and another, crying out in the night.

I stanched the flow of blood with a handkerchief, and, binding the wound as best I could, at the same time curbing the anger that was endeavoring to make a murderer of me, I took a leap forward, and landed some telling kicks on the pirate's ribs. He groaned and swore, and staggered to his feet, but fell again.

"Murderer!" said I, "get up, and row as you have never done before. Row for the Wind Cave! Take my boat; I follow you with yours and the treasure—and this!" And I drew from my pocket my gun, newly cleaned and primed, and pointed it at my enemy. "Not a jot from your course, old man, or there'll be one damned murderer less. Now, move!"

With the bright muzzle gleaming at him, MacFayden had no choice but to obey. He loosened his boat, with my eye upon him, and straightened himself for the pull he had hoped to make alone, and set out upon his course. As he pushed away from shore, I stepped toward my boat, and as I did so, my foot struck against a stone that moved, and I heard the rustle of paper. Stooping quickly, I picked up the papers that MacFayden had evidently put under the stone for safe keeping while he murdered me, and transferred them to my pocket, with the intention of inspecting them at the first opportunity. The incident took only a second of time, and I was soon following him, face forward, for in that position I could row equally as well as the man before me.

After a short time, I laid my gun beside me, and, taking the papers from my pocket, straightened them out on one of the boxes. It was only the work of a moment to see that they were maps of the island and the Wind Cave, that MacFayden had been freshening his memory with while he thought I slept; and, doubtless, the thoughts of what the cave contained made him more determined to rid himself of the fool who knew too much.

After a half hour's rowing, MacFayden

deviated from his course. I thought his actions suspicious, so consulted the map and a pocket compass, and saw the extent of the deviation. "Blast you, pirate!" I screamed. "Keep to the left there! Quick, now! To the left!" And I leveled my gun.

The old man protested that he knew the course to the Wind Cave, and, resting on one oar, clapped his other hand to his side, evidently to feel his maps. I smiled as I saw the look of disappointment and consternation on his face. He dropped his other oar. "Lad, I canna gae tae the Wind Cave wi'oot me papers that we maun hae lost in our wee tiff. I'll haf tae gae tae shoor, an, mayhap——"

"Mayhap you won't!" I said. "To the left and forward!"

"But, lad, I——"

"To the left, or, by the gods! this water will soon be putrid with the decaying flesh of a leper. I have your precious papers, and your treasure. To the left, and forward!"

MacFayden muttered some imprecations, and, slowly grasping his oars, with a flashing look at his superior, turned to the left, and rowed in the direction of the Wind Cave.

CHAPTER IX

A FITTING DEATH

For long, weary hours, we rowed. I at times painfully felt the wound between my shoulders. The blood had oozed out, dried and hardened; and now the sun's heat drew the surrounding flesh as though it would fain close the wound altogether. My clothing stuck to the cut, or rasped across the coagulated blood, or, tearing the wound afresh, caused the blood to flow freely again. But I bit my lips, and went on.

I watched the man ahead of me, and consulted the maps and charts. Every stroke now brought us nearer, nearer to the realization of my hopes and adventures, and to the reward for the rescue of the boat. If no reward awaited me there, I would retain what I had—the boat's cargo of gold and gems; not that I craved to possess relics of murdered men and women, but I felt that I had a better right to them than the murderer had. I wanted, more than all, to hold MacFayden to his promise, and make him sacrifice what was as dear to

him as life. The mere possession of the valuables meant little to me, but much to my enemy; and it was to outwit him that I retained them. To clasp jewels that the owner's dead, clammy hands would never clasp again, meant much more of horror than pleasure to me who would not intentionally draw blood on a living thing.

The drawings on the map were rough and crudely done, but every rock was marked as if actually measured by feet and inches. Every little turn of the land was distinctly shown, every cape and rocky projection, making many little bays and tiny gulfs, each of which was pencilled as if alive, on the dirty, grimy, greasy papers that had been folded and refolded so many times that, good linen though they once were, they now showed breaks and tears. A tiny gulf would have to span a break in the paper by an imaginary bridge to unite with the remainder of itself on the other side of the crevasse. Caverns in the rocks, looming dark and unearthly in the map maker's mind, would find themselves rent asunder by a tear. But the outlines were good. I could easily have recognized the winding lines of the island, now in, now out, here a rock, there a cavern, here a peninsula, there,

nestling close against the land, a tiny bay.

But forward and onward MacFayden rowed. His stroke was slow, steady and regular. He was weary with the exertion of the day, but as he neared his destination, his weather-beaten, leprous face lighted up with animation, and he looked wistfully ahead of him. He seemed to have forgotten me in the delight of the moment. A dead calm had settled over this portion of the sea, and the rays of the sun were reflected in the mirror of the ocean. I paddled steadily forward, following the old man in his winding route. I kept a watchful eye on the map, and saw with pleasure that he was steering accurately.

"Around rock 1—Left of rock 2—To right of Bald-face," I read, then looked for "Bald-face." That must be the huge rock that towers over to the east, like a giant watchman overlooking the other rocks, which were pigmies in comparison. "To Right of Bald-face." Yes, the pirate was steering carefully to the right, with his face turned back over his shoulder. I smiled as I thought how distinctly he knew the way; but, doubtless, he had made many trips through the narrow channel with his ill-gotten wealth, and knew his route as thoroughly as a child knows its primer. Straight forward now

for about ten rods, then he turned abruptly to the left, and rowed to the eastward of the island. The water gurgled and played about on the rocks, and in and out of tiny caverns.

To me, the whole island looked as if it might be an immense cavern, affording ample recesses for the stowing away of priceless gems; but to me the love of adventure was stronger than the love of gold, for of the latter I had never known a lack, being able at all times to turn a hand to something that would bring me money enough for my immediate needs; thus leaving intact the little that had been left to my credit years before. But I delighted in adventure, and was only waiting anxiously to explore the Wind Cave and penetrate its hidden recesses.

Forward we went now, toward two great, over-hanging rocks that almost met, and which were covered with mossy vegetation, and small shrubs standing out as from a solid wall. Vines hung from the top of each rock, met and mingled in the center—great, rope-like masses that hung down and almost touched the water. Through these the pirate was pushing his way, when a cry—a wild, piercing cry of sudden terror—rent the air, and I hastened forward as fast as I could to ascertain the cause. Mac-

Fayden, intent on noting the curves of the island, had not looked above him and seen the bright eyes that were riveted upon him; but, intent on the one thought, he neither saw nor heard his deadly enemy until it had fallen from the rope of vines, and had begun slowly, but surely, to embrace him, with its glittering eyes bright with the delight of its prey.

I saw all this in a twinkling, and, though hating and loathing the man who was being encircled by the deadly and powerful snake, I was prompted by humane feelings to endeavor to save the leper's life. I rowed as fast as I could toward the other boat, all the while the man's cries and shrieks were rending the air and echoing back and forth in the many caverns and among the rocks.

"Murder, murder!" he shrieked. "Lad, help, help!" then a long cry that was fainter than before. "O Holy Faither, help! Help, lad! O blessed St. Andrew, hear me! O lad, why be ye sae sloo? The devil is aifter me—the devil that tempted oor fairst mither! What hae I dune that he should coom for me? By the tower o' St. Rule, I be eennocent—an' poor. Help, lad, ye fool!" His mood changed a little. "Coom on, coom on, devil! Dae yer wairst! I defy ye!" and the man in his death

"Murder! murder!" he shrieked

agonies tried to grasp the snake by the throat, but it eluded his hand and darted its head here and there, as if mocking him.

MacFayden threw his arms wildly about. His face grew redder and redder. His eyes were now turned heavenward, now toward me; but I seemed to come only too slowly. "O blessed God! Lord, hae mercy oopon me! O all the sancts, pray for me!" Doubtless, when face to face with death, the teachings of his childhood, that had so long been neglected, recurred to him with increased force. "Christ, hae peety! Jesus, hear me! Peety, peety the ane wha loves Thee! Peety th' ane wha wud gie oop his life tae servit Thee!"

I came nearer and nearer, priming my gun as I came, but an opportunity to shoot the snake was lacking. The reptile seemed to scent danger and to cling tighter to the old man who turned pleading eyes upon me as his only rescue. He caught the bright gleam of the pistol, and seeing therein hope, cried, "Shoot, lad, shoot! Hit 'im! Shoot! Fire! Fire, *now!* By the bones o' St. Andrew, he's choking me! O God! Fire, ye slow fool! Quick, quick! D——n ye, if I ever get oot o' thees! Ye want me treasures a,' but ye'll hae get 'em. Fire, fire!"

The snake slily crawled up over the man's shoulder, and, as if understandingly, encircled his arms, pinioning them fast to his sides. For only the fraction of a second its head was visible, and I fired. I could not tell whether I had missed aim or accomplished my purpose; only by the rapidity of the snake in increasing and tightening the coils around the man, I guessed that I had not shot far wide the mark. Man and snake were struggling, and their motions were rocking the boat to one side, then to the other, until it dipped and dipped again into the ocean's brine.

I saw and realized the peril and hastened to them, but just as I attempted to enter the narrow passageway, a companion snake showed itself amidst the vines. Backward I rowed, and fired. My aim was accurate, and the snake fell with a thud into the water. At that moment, a choking cry from MacFayden attracted my attention, and I saw him now entering Death's door, locked fast in the coils of the reptile. It had fastened itself around the man's throat and was choking him to death. His purple face was visible, and the sight of it aroused me to renewed determination to save his life, if possible. Man and snake were falling. The boat dipped again and threw them

outward. For an instant the head of the snake rose above its victim's head, and I fired—once, twice. The second shot took the reptile's head clean from its body; but the leper, doubtless thinking even in his death agony that I had aimed at him, thus making his death doubly sure, as the struggling, dying snake slightly loosened its hold, cried, "Murderer! Curse ye, murderer!" and all was over. They fell into the water together. They sank, then rose again, then sank, and I saw them no more.

My boat, so recently occupied by the leper, was now free, and was floating slowly away. I sat for a moment as one stunned at the terrible sight, then realizing that I could do nothing more for the man who had gone to face the victims of his past deeds, I rowed swiftly after the fleeing boat. The current was swift in the passage-way, and little propelling power was necessary. I hurried forward, and, catching the boat that was flecked about with the blood of snake, or man, I fastened it to my own treasure boat, and rowed for land.

I was weak and weary with the transactions of the night and the day, and, after assuring myself that the boats were made fast to land, I quenched my thirst from my bottle of water, then crawled to a sheltering rock and lay

down, too exhausted to care whether I lived or died. The wound between my shoulders had reopened and was bleeding profusely. It matted my clothing that hurt with the rasping. I drew myself painfully to a sitting posture, removed the clothing from above my waist, and bathed the cut as best I could; then, wrapping my garments loosely about me, I lay down again, with rocks for bed and pillow, and sank into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER X

AN ANGEL UNAWARES

Into each one's life comes a beam of light,
Oft unexpected as 'tis bright;
And if but followed to the end,
'Twill show where soul with soul doth blend;
If shunned, as ofttimes be the case,
And turn aside, give back for face,
Amidst a storm of bitter tears
We pass through penitential years.

It is a blessing that few appreciate—the blessing of unconsciousness. Perhaps we are in nowise to blame for our non-appreciation, not even being conscious enough to know whether we be our responsible selves, or someone else irresponsible. To one afflicted with disease and weariness, there is nothing so welcome as sleep; and what is sleep but unconsciousness? Certain it is that during its embrace we are not conscious. But when disease lays its hand on a victim, sleep is doubly welcome; and when the unconscious condition lasts hour after hour, and day after day, the

state of not realizing and comprehending the ravages of disease, is a blessing to the sufferer that cannot be measured.

Wounded, exhausted in body and mind with my unusual exertions, I lay down to rest, leaving the awakening in the hands of a Higher Power. With the weariness that enveloped me as a heavy mantle, compelling me to rest and sleep, I little cared when, if ever, the awakening took place. I existed in the present, more dead than alive. As to the future and its effects, I was too tired to give a thought. I cared not, only that I might rest, blissfully rest.

When the feeling of unconsciousness was first creeping over me, closing my eyes and dulling my senses, I warmly embraced it, and lay down neath a sheltering rock, as peacefully as though the rock were a mother, and I a tired child desiring sleep in maternal arms. My undressed wound had caused me insufferable pain throughout the long, hot day; but all that was forgotten as I lapsed into non-comprehension, with the fragrance of aromatic flowers and shrubs round about me, the lapping of the water on the pebbly strand sounding fainter and farther away, the cry of the sea-birds sounding like far distant echoes as they

flew quite near the shore where I reposed. Unconsciousness is not a time-keeper. It knows not the measure of an hour, a day or a week. A day may seem but a moment, or an hour may lengthen into weeks.

Just so with me. My brain was dulled, and for hours and hours, days and days, I lay, not realizing in the faintest degree the passage of time. I was only dimly conscious at times of a raging, burning thirst; but in some way I knew not, that was satisfied, whether by the damp kisses of the night dews, or the cool, refreshing rain. When the fever burned hottest in my veins, heating the weary brain to distraction, I thought I felt a hand, cool and moist, laid upon my forehead, smoothing back my hair, and quieting my ravings, as only a mother could do. I often thought, as I was but dimly emerging into the light of reason again, and reflected on my past that had seemed but a dream, that none but angels could have ministered to me in such a manner. No one but nymphs of the island or sea, or spirits of the air, could have reached me here.

Little by little, consciousness was returning, and I began the attempt to realize the situation, present and past. But my brain was weak; I was easily exhausted, and, for the time

being, I was only too willing to allow matters to shape themselves as they would, and take the loving ministrations, be they fanciful or real, and bless the source without questioning. I knew of no human being who ever came to the island, except the leper—and I had seen him die. But perhaps his death was only a dream, and he would appear again with blood-red hands and ink-black heart, and claim me. Oh! it was so hard to separate the real from the imaginations of a diseased mind; and I, now only a skeleton over which the skin was loosely drawn, was only too glad to give way to sleep.

When I awoke, I ever found tropical dainties near me, served, not on china or fine porcelain, but on bits of bark and cool green leaves. Berries, few but inviting, were waiting to stain my dry, parched lips coral; fruits from the cocoanut, whose milk I drank with a relish, stood near in a cup-shaped rock; green, tender stalks of a plant that resembled the garden lettuce in growth, but taller and not so spreading, were within reach of my hand; and water—good, cold, clear water that tasted as if it had just come from the springs in my own native Blue Mountains, was always at hand, and I drank and was refreshed. An egg, yet warm

from contact with boiling water, with a pinch of salt, formed one of my most desirable repasts.

I grew stronger daily, and with my growing strength flesh began to form again on my withered body. My transparent hands and fingers accumulated flesh until they were plump and opaque again. My hair, now long and wavy, began to fall from my head; but my face, that had heretofore been smoothly shaven, was covered with a rough, shaggy beard.

My appetite increased with my vigor, and when I most strongly wished for more food, as if in answer to my unspoken request, it was granted me. The shelving rock that was imbedded on my right seemed by nature formed for a table, and I grew to look toward that each time on awakening, as I would to a provider for my every need. If my appetite craved two eggs, they awaited me; as did also baked roots, bearing a striking resemblance to potatoes, only they were darker in color, inclining to a purplish hue, and when pierced the contents showed as white as milk, mealy and delicious. It was like being in fairy land, where one's wishes are scarcely formed until fulfilled, where one's innermost thoughts

and desires are known before spoken.

After my first two or three struggles to comprehend the source of so much good, I gave it up, and took things as a matter of course; but, with a naturally active brain, as the clouds cleared from my mind, I began again to wonder. What had appeared to me, in disease, as bestowed by the angels, with my increasing strength, to my chagrin, took on a decidedly human form and shape. I was gradually, but surely, becoming disillusioned; but with each day I saw the conclusion not so clearly as before, and, clinging tenaciously to my sick fancy, I began to wish that I had remained in ignorance. It was a welcome thought to me to receive angelic ministrations, but reason seemed impelling me forward, though, to me, with less satisfaction than before.

When full consciousness reigned, I noted what I had not before; that my bed was not of the bare rock altogether, but the barrenness was now covered with sweet, fragrant boughs of the hemlock; and on that was grass, light and feathery like the pampas grass. Over this was spread one of my own blankets, with another for covering. This, I thought, must account for my dreams of being swayed in the soft branches of bending trees, with ever a

fragrance pure and sweet about me. This, too, must account for my dreams of childhood, in my own downy bed, with my mother's foot rocking me while her hands worked incessantly on something new and pretty for me.

I seemed to be a child again, with thoughts and desires of childhood, with more of appreciation than I had ever before experienced. I knew I had been very sick with a wasting disease that burned the flesh from my bones and the reason from my mind. I knew not what had kept me from dying, unless it be the ministrations of the unknown being, celestial or terrestrial, I knew not which, and cared now even less. But the thought was very sweet to me that some one or some thing in this unknown land cared enough for me to save my life, and whoever this mysterious personage might be, I was grateful, though life in itself seemed to hold so little in store for me. But I, like all youth, and many aged, too, clung to this life, knowing and realizing its joys and sorrows, in preference to one of which I knew nothing from actual experience.

With growing health came the joy of living. The warm sunshine seemed glad that I had lived. The birds seemed to sing more sweetly because I was still in the land of earth, and the

bright, pretty flowers grew more abundantly and breathed their sweet fragrance on the air, which wafted it to my dilating nostrils again and again. The seabirds, calling and crying to one another, flew over the rocks beside which I lay, looking down at me with their piercing, penetrating eyes, or perched for an instant on the boats that still remained intact, rising and falling with the lapping water on the pebbly beach.

In truth, were it not for the sight of these boats, the one my own, the other containing the ill-gotten gains of the leper, I should have found it hard to recall the past; for when I had crawled upon the shore and lain down by the rocks for what I thought was my death sleep, I was not more than half conscious, and had realized little of my surroundings. With the awakening, everything had seemed strange, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the black canvas-covered boat that had better been sunk to the bottom of the sea with the one who had murdered to procure its load.

When I was able to be up and take my first feeble steps, holding on to the rocks, or to any object near, like a child learning to walk, I truly felt that I was not forsaken by all the world. The days passed more quickly, and

from the fatigue of the day the sleep of the night was deep and refreshing, and I awoke on each succeeding morn feeling more and more like my old self. Each morning found a dainty, tropical repast awaiting me. Each morning found water cool and sparkling near at hand; and I ate my meals and drank the water as unthoughtedly as a child takes sustenance from its parents, never questioning the source but taking it as its right. I had wearied of the failure to ascertain the angel, and had given up the task entirely, and now gave no thought to it, considering it one of Nature's mysteries.

But one morning I awoke from my sleep and illusion: there was no repast awaiting me! No fresh, delicious eggs of the turtle and land birds; no succulent vegetables; but only water —water as fresh and pure as ever before. I began to think. I wondered why my angel had ceased her ministrations, why I was to be deprived of my breakfast, what I had done to deserve punishment, for surely it were the worst punishment to deprive me of necessities for sating my vigorous appetite.

I hastily arose from my bed and determined to explore the island at once in search of something eatable. For the first time in long weeks

I thought of my gun, and, believing I might find it to be of use, I looked around about me for it. I went to the boats and searched, but no sign of the missing weapon. I came back and set my sluggish brain to work in an effort to find my lost companion. I looked on my bed, around it and under it, and in the shelving of the rock; but no trace. I grew almost angry in my impatience, and felt in each of my pockets, but with no better success. I gave up in despair, believing that I had dropped it after firing in the attempt to protect MacFayden. I must, perforce, go forth now and hunt for food, with no gun to kill one of the many birds that hovered over the island. I armed myself with a club, why, I hardly knew, but I was accustomed to having something for defense, or aggressiveness, if need be.

For an hour I wandered near and far over the island, looking for game of some kind, but the birds flew away at my approach, giving vent to their warning cries; and little animals scurried away in the thickets and heavy grass that wound about my feet. At last, weary and exhausted, disheartened and disappointed, I sat down upon a broad, flat stone to rest. As I did so, a bird, bluish gray in color, with a white ruff around its neck, flew up quite near

me, uttering a startled cry. I got up and looked amidst the feathery grass for its nest; and there, in a rock that seemed made for the purpose, was the snug little home carpeted with the softest of grasses for the four tiny little feathered occupants. Hunger tried to persuade me to take the birds, and I reached out to lift them from their nest, but I quickly withdrew my hand as the four little mouths opened wide, begging me for food. The mother flew back and hovered near, her cries sounding wonderfully pitiful as though entreating me to leave her birdlings in safety. Once, twice, and again I made an attempt to take them, for I felt as if I should famish did I not have food soon; but each time I drew back, more ashamed than before. Then I thought to kill the mother, and care for the young ones myself, but I knew they would die, or live to curse me with their half-starved bodies. A thought of the pirate flashed over me, and a deep red dyed my face. Was I not in heart like him—a murderer?

With long, determined strides, I left the nest, angry with myself for thinking one moment's ill to the tiny birds, the mother flying caressingly near, echoing delighted cries. I wandered down by the water's edge, and there

I found turtles' eggs in plenty. Lighting a fire with matches from my tinder box, I roasted the eggs in the sand, and enjoyed my breakfast thoroughly, feeling all the better that I had been compelled to shift for myself and that I had spared the lives of the young birds from my voracious appetite.

Turtles there were in plenty on the island, and their eggs were delicious; and there was no lack of the purple potato, as I named it. It grew profusely, being especially fond, seemingly, of the light, sandy soil. There were fruits and berries of many kinds for the hunting, and I looked forward not with sadness to a Robinson Crusoe life. With the boats I could explore all the water round about, satisfying my innate longing for adventure, and find, if possible (and to me in my youth there seemed nothing impossible to one who was determined and persevering), the Wind Cave. I was certain that somewhere on this island was located the cave whose treasures the pirate had promised me. But as well promise me a seat in the Paradise where MacFayden would find it all but impossible to obtain admittance, as to give me the riches of a cave that could not be found.

Day after day I searched, but was not

rewarded. The island was full of caves and caverns that seemed to lead into the bowels of the earth, but on entering only a short way I retraced my steps, disappointed. But the fascination of the search spurred me on. My time was my own, the boats were at my disposal, and I continued my explorations.

CHAPTER XI

TWO MYSTERIOUS PRESENCES

As yet, I was as ignorant of the source of my good fortune as I had been when eating the refreshments set before me while prostrate with disease. My wanderings over the island, visiting and partially exploring its many caves, had revealed nothing in human shape. Little animals scurried here and there at my approach; birds in large flocks flew upward with a whirring sound from their feeding fields, as I came near, but not even so much as a footprint, except my unmistakable own, rewarded my careful scrutiny.

Each day I was becoming more and more convinced that I was sole occupant of the island. The novelty held a strong fascination for me, and I walked as proudly as though I were in reality a king and the island and surrounding waters my domain. That I should probably spend my days here alone did not bring one regret from me. That I might grow weary of my own company and, in time, long for other companionship did not once occur to

me, and indeed, if it had it would not have daunted the ardor of my spirits, for I was buoyant with youth, life and hope, and felt equal to the task of surmounting any obstacle, however monstrous it might seem; and each day found me as full of adventure as the preceding one, and as ready to go over the grounds in search of something new that was ever appearing.

Caves hung rich with stalactites that looked for all the world like so many jewels hanging suspended from the cave's roof, or lying in beads on the cold, damp rocks that formed a flooring. Queer little gems imbedded in rocky formations of centuries were as eagerly sought after and more valued, by far, than the precious ones that formed the burden of the black canvas-covered boat; and were much more highly prized because they required a little effort to procure, while the jewels formerly in the old leper's possession had cost me nothing.

It had not once occurred to me to secrete the boats. I would have scoffed at the idea had it entered my mind, and more so as day after day passed and no one beside myself was seen on the island. But one day after unusually long and busy hours full of explorations, I lay down on my soft bed that now

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seemed dearer than ever to me, and was soon fast in dreamless sleep, for I was too exhausted to spend the sleeping hours in idle dreaming. I knew not what time it was when I awoke, but a sound of voices fell on my ear, not loud, but very distinct. I sat upright, and rubbed my eyes and forehead vigorously, and tried to recall whether or not I had been visited with an undesirable nightmare. But I soon discovered that what I heard was real, and not a dream.

Occasionally the voices sounded as if in angry altercation, and were louder than before. The night was moonless, but not a cloud was visible—one of those clear, mistless nights from which the veil has been lifted, permitting us, for the time, to gaze unmolested at myriads of worlds beyond, doubtless containing different degrees of intelligence and development —a night that seems unconsciously to draw one out and beyond the mere humdrum of existence, into the great realms of life. Bright stars twinkled in the heavens, and far to the east appeared a comet that was now only faintly visible, seemingly trying to make its way far from sight, but leaving a trail of golden light behind it to show where it had been.

I was now wide awake, but sat still, hoping

to understand more fully the subject under discussion. I had not long to wait, for a muffled voice, that sounded nearer than before, said:

"'Twas somewhere hereabouts that 'twas hid. I was with 'im at the time——"

"Yes, but you blamed fool! you'll never go fur on yer mem'ry. If I'd been the one what was with 'im——"

"Oh, yes, Chinkie, you'd a done wonders, you would!" interrupted the first speaker, angrily. "When you couldn't tell tother day whether Andros was west or south, an' what's more you couldn't tell whether ye was goin' 'cordin' to the p'ints on the compass or not. I'd talk if I's you. An' when the sun was shinin' its brightest in the bargain."

"Twa'n't! 'Twas cloudy!"

"Cloudy!" and the first speaker chuckled. "That's some more of yer recollectin'. A great mem'ry you've got, by ginger! to be tauntin' me! I've told you 'twas nigh ten year ago, an d'ye spose I kin recollect ev'ry little rock an' float that the storms might a brung here sence? You must think I'm God hisself to know ev'ry blessed thing—me what has been all over sence—Barb'does—Indies—Sandwiches—Caribbees—Med'tranean—an' ev'ry damned place where a pirate could hide,

or where he could find a safe place for his yaller, or a sucker to tackle. After all my doin's in the Pacific an' 'Tlantic, besides bein' floundered in the Indian a couple or three times, an' all the other waters, you can't spect me to remember the measly sum of ten thousan', that was hid here'bouts, can ye?"

"Ten thousan'!" exclaimed Chinkie. "Is there that much, Bill?"

"Yes, there *was*; but that's a sorry lot to one what has let enough yaller slip through his paws to fill a king's tool chist. An' 'twere not that I'm pushed——"

"You old fool! you oughter lose it all fer keepin' it to yerself fer so long. The secret oughter burnt yer tongue out afore this! An' me a starvin' all the time—an' starvin' now! I'd kill ye yet fer it, if 'twasn't fer usin' you more."

"Take care, you puppy! take care! Don't fool with me. You'll know more when you leave off yer milk diet and sugar-tit. What ribbon have you got tied to me? None, you damned sucklin' calf! An' you won't hitch none, neither. Old MacFayden——" at this name I bent eagerly forward, "tried a tilt on me onct, but he come near bein' food fer sharks on account of it. There's a Wind Cave

on this island, kid, that'll be holdin' you direct, if ye open yer clam-shell to this old tar agin; an' when ye find a bunk in that cave yer anchor's down an' the wind's outer yer sails."

I smiled bitterly to myself as I thought of MacFayden's reference to the Wind Cave, and to his promises. Now, I had no doubt of his fulfilling every promise had he lived, and had it been in his power, for if such a fate awaited one in that cave, the old pirate would have been the first to lure a troublesome victim there, especially when he found he was inferior in strength and strategy to his opponent. The two men conversed in low tones for awhile, and from their next words I knew that their little difference had been settled over a bottle.

"A leper, did ye say?" exclaimed one of them, whose voice I recognized as being that of Chinkie, the younger man. "If that's true, he's dead long sence."

"I'm not so sure about that. He didn't have that kind. 'Twas the long an' lingerin' kind."

"Ketchin'?"

"Not as I knows of; I haint got it. But I never slep' with 'im, I'll give you a tip on that. An' me an' him allers had different boats, too."

"Afeard?"

"I've been a damned sight braver. But I wasn't the only one. I've seed 'im most scare the wits outen folks by hollerin' 'Unclean!' at 'em." And the man chuckled. I chuckled, too. "I seed 'im onct hop aboard a Yankee brig, an', durn me! if that yell of his'n an' his goldarned face an' eyes didn't scare all of 'em so that they all throwed up their hands, an' me an' him made a good haul that time, I tell you. They was lots of chokers on board, an' they throwed up like good fellers. We got enough swag to last us a spell, I tell you, for the ship's hold was full of yaller."

"But how d'ye get away so easy?" asked Chinkie, interestedly.

"Twant easy. But we dived down an' swum, a holdin' onter our boats. The chokers woke up after we left, an' fired at us heavy, or where they thought we was. We both got a few slugs, but mine come a little the nighest to peachin' me. Look! you see this ear?"

"I see where it oughter be."

"Well, that was took at that time, an' I got this little airhole in my cheek, where you can see my grinders; that was done then, too. No, not this one. I got that in the Barb'does when I got too close to a muzzle of a bogie's gun.

But yer all right as long as ye kin breathe, an' I'm as good a breather as ye've seen, if the air does whistle through my face a little more than's common. But Mac, the old devil!"

"But how d'ye know he's dead?"

"He aint been to the light-house fer nigh three months."

"That's nothin'."

"Yes, 'tis. Not that he cared a damn fer the light-house, but he does fer the swag that he kin git. No, he wouldn't," he said, in answer to something I did not hear; "he'd a come here; an' ye see he aint here."

"Yes, but the man I seen yesterday might a been him."

"You didn't see no man, by ginger! Yer glass is all cob-webbed like yer brains, an' ye took a rock fer a man."

"That's what *you* say. But bein' with *things* don't keep me from knowin' a *man* when I see one."

"Hell! then where is he? We've looked this pesky island all over, an' come back purty nigh where we started from."

"No, we aint. It's a quarter further down here, an' there's room fer a regiment twixt here and there!"

The older man laughed. "Damn it, find him then!"

I felt uneasily for my revolver, but, of course, was disappointed. I grew angry with myself for being so defenceless. There was nothing near that I could use as a weapon. I sat quite still, but alert for the slightest move in my direction.

"You kin well say 'find 'im', when the whole kit and cargo of a ship might hide twixt these rocks that looks as if they was made fer the devil's fort. Let's put the thing off till daylight, then look agin. I'm tired of this monkeyin'. If you had half the brains of old Mac we'd find the pile thout lookin' allers. I'll wager the old pirate could find it thout any trouble."

"Maybe he could," said Bill, indifferently, "an' maybe he has."

Chinkie spoke up fiercely: "Do you mean to say that you've played me foul? that you've brung me here on a fool's errand? that there's no gold here? I'll kill you fer this! To hold a bit of vittles to a starvin' man's mouth, then snatch it away 'fore he gits a bite! Damn you, devil!"

I caught a faint gleam of a knife in the starlight, but the intended murderer missed his

aim and fell headlong over an obstruction. The other was upon him, cursing and swearing as loudly as the under-dog. In the dim light I could see the struggle for the mastery. Over and over they rolled in their battle, now up, now under. They tumbled perilously near the water's edge, and spluttering sounds were mingled with the oaths. The older man apparently gained the power of speech first, and spoke out quite triumphantly, as though he had gained the victory, too:

"I'll learn you how to call me a liar, you bellerin', suckin' calf! You'll find I'm not a ghost yit; leastwise, I'm a purty good wrastler up to date. 'Cuse me of bringin' you here, when you begged an' pled fer me to come! I told you how 'twas long ago, an' how old Mac has knowed it fer all these years. Blast ye! Now I've got you under I'll keep you there till ye ax my pardon, an' promise to mind yer own bizness. Not a damned bit of yaller will I hunt fer ye till ye do."

"Curse you, Bill! I'll blow yer brains out yet, if I am——"

Such pounding, cursing and yelling as I had seldom heard, came from these two animals fighting for the mastery. Would it be a survival of the fittest? Both were equally unfit,

and it could but be a triumph of sheer brute strength—of men who were not men, but mere animals—mere wild and wolfish dogs quarreling over a carcass—fighting over the blood-bought treasures of human beings sacrificed on the altar of greed whose consuming fires were kindled by selfishness, hate and hell, with a murderer for a priest, whose sacramental garments were reeking with human blood, whose hands were indelibly dyed with the crimson flow, with heart of adamant, whose soul was black as the wings of night, unrevolting at the spectacle, whose instruments of music were human skulls that rattled to the accompaniment of the cries of the sacrificed.

A click, and, "Now, will you stab me?" And with one mighty effort, Chinkie threw his antagonist off, and rose to his feet, but in his rush he stumbled and nearly fell again. The older man gave an exultant cry, and sprang forward, only to stumble and fall. But he had scarcely fallen until he was on his feet again, looking curiously around him.

"Golly, what's this? A rope, Chinkie! A rope!"

Chinkie came quickly, and felt the rope. "It's hitched to sumpin!"

"An' what's the sumpin?"

"Dunno. O holy Moses! a boat! *two* boats!"

"Careful! It's the old devil!" said Bill, confidently.

"I told you I seen a man here on the island!"

"This aint no man," retorted Bill in a change of humor, retracting what he had unintentionally conceded.

"Taint, hey! Who brung these boats here?"

"It's yore bid; ye kin make it what ye want to. But I fer one don't care who done it if we kin——" And his voice sank to a whisper.

"Hurry, then! Be quick!" And one rope was cut in twain. "You take one, an' I'll take the other. Quick!"

"Be still, you fool! Anyone here could hear yer blab. You'll never make a pirate."

"I don't care if I do or don't if I kin only git the pirates' boodle; *fer one boat's loaded!*"

"Hell! is it?"

"Look here!"

"Damme, if it aint the old man hisself! I know his tricks, an' he won't be far away, I'll warrant!"

"Dunno 'bout that," says Chinkie. "He thinks he's king here."

"He is, by golly! The boat's sure loaded, an' heavy, too!"

"What with, d'ye reckon? Dimonds——" began Chinkie, excitedly.

"Yaller, of course!" said the other man patronizingly. "Old Mac never loads with nothin' else. What are ye so durned slow about? I'll take the loaded boat, an' you——"

"Not much you don't! Ye can't come that on me, miser! I'll——"

"Stand back, or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot away, but I'll have the boat!"

I arose, and with a voice that had the hollow sound of a sepulchre, cried, "Unclean! unclean!" The men stopped, listened. "Unclean! unclean!" and I stepped recklessly out from the shelter of the rock, and was plainly visible.

With cries of terror, the men jumped, each into a boat, and pushed off, firing as they did so. I grasped the severed ropes, and pulled with all my strength. The men, terror-stricken, forgot to row, and were brought gradually back toward the beach. In the faint light of the morning, I could be distinctly seen, and both men fired point blank at me; but I, aware of their every movement, ducked in time to save myself. They thought their aim had proved true, but my later action disproved that. I lifted a large stone and threw it directly toward the canvas-covered boat. With a scream of pain and fright the occu-

pant leaped and made for the shore, while the boat dipped and sank. I was lifting another rock to sink the second boat, when its occupant, with an unearthly scream, sprang into the water, and splashed for the shore, shrieking, "The devil an' his angels! The devil an' his angels!"

I turned to see the cause of the commotion, and there, clothed in long, white robes that shimmered in the light like finest satin, was a creature I could not describe. The surprise was as great for me as for the pirates, as I watched the dazzling image with long, flowing, coal-black hair, pursue, with wondrous rapidity, the fleeing men. Whatever or whoever it was, I knew it was arrayed on my side, and I did not fear, although I felt a weird, uncanny sensation.

The situation despite the dangers was amusing, and I laughed as I heard far up the island, two voices in terror crying, "Jesus Christ, a ghost, a spook! Heaven save us! Keep us from the ghost!—the devil an' his angels!"

Then a pistol shot rang out that echoed and echoed again in the stillness of the dawn, and the bullet went whizzing through the air, cutting its way with a singing sound. Then it stopped with a sickening thud!

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

I did not lie down to rest again during the small remnant of the night, but wandered aimlessly around, as though in a dream, until daylight dawned clear and bright. As soon as I could see quite distinctly I followed in the direction the pirates had taken; on, on up the island I went, now turning out for a broken tree or a huge rock that, could they speak, could tell, no doubt, of terrible oaths and mad ravings that followed a fall which further hindered the men in their flight from the "ghost". But I, in less of a hurry than they had been, was not hindered by these obstacles, for I took to the pebbly beach instead.

For a half hour or more I walked, when I came to where the freebooters had landed. I saw where their boat had been drawn up on the shore. I saw footprints that led away from the boat. I saw the remains of a fire that had been kindled in the shelter of a rock, out of sight from where I slept. Here and there I saw an empty bottle; and there, quite near to

where I stopped, I found the pistol whose sound had rung out on the clear air of the night. I picked it up. Yes; it had been fired, and but recently; only one chamber was empty. The man had evidently loaded as he ran, then fired once. But if it was a ghost in pursuit, I laughed at the result.

The men had taken sudden and effective leave, leaving the buried treasure of the leper as safe as before their coming, and the boat with its load sunk in the salt water. But for that I had no fears; I would rescue it at my leisure, for most of it was secure from the ravages of the ocean's brine. As far as I could see there was nothing visible of my unexpected visitors. The sun was rising in all his splendor, penetrating a thin veil of mist that had begun to rise far out over the waters, causing the god of day to seem all the grander as he rose, casting his vari-colored beams through the vapor, and making every tiny cloud a rainbow-tinted pillow for the new-born rays. The waves on the pebbles seemed to take fresh courage with the electric warmth and to lap louder than before. They washed up near where I was standing, as if to hide the retracing footprints of the pursued.

I turned back, with head down, meditating

over the events, and wondering if the visit of the pirates would be renewed, and, knowing that the island was occupied, would come with fresh aggressiveness and better defence, when least expected. From their conversation, I thought one of them, at least, daring enough to risk anything for gold; but the other, more cautious, might over-persuade him. The thought of their coming, however, did not daunt me in the least, for now I was better prepared than before, and I thought, not without a chuckle of pride, that I could hit a mark as well as anyone. I had been called the champion wing-shot at college, and I felt that I had not deteriorated. To test my skill, I threw a small stone, not over an inch in diameter, into the air, and, without taking aim, fired and shivered the pebble into atoms. At the sound of the gun, from all over the island birds arose, disturbed in their morning meal, and flew terror-stricken about, singly or in flocks; but, seeing that no harm was intended them, they gradually settled again to their breakfast and their little ones.

Far to the westward, I heard a noise that sounded at first like an echo from my own gun. But once, twice and yet again the sound reverberated, and I cursed myself for being a fool

and challenging the desperadoes, who, by their shots intended for an answer to mine, meant, sooner or later, to make another attack on the island, and this time would find no surprise with which they could not cope.

I put the gun into my pocket with a feeling of disgust that my vanity had prompted me to rashness. But I meditated: Now I knew the men had not gone for good and all, when, otherwise, seeing no trace of them, I might have been led to believe that they did not intend coming back, and my confidence would have meant the surrender of my life. I hastened my steps, and determined as I went to put the sunken boat with its precious cargo where they would never reach it. They now would be doubly desperate because they knew of its being there, but I hardly thought they would make the attack soon, not until I would have time, at any rate, to conceal the jewels, and find for myself a better stronghold, of which the island had many.

I was hastening along when something attracted my attention, and I stopped suddenly. I looked down at my feet and saw a bright red spot. I knelt down and looked closely. Blood! bright, crimson blood! Perhaps of the pirates. No: they had been the

only ones armed! Ah, a bird! Yes, it must be a bird, wounded by the shot. Absurd! No bird was in range of the gun at night. Perhaps some little animal that had met with an accident of some kind, or had been bitten by a more ferocious one. I walked on, while the drops became more numerous. I stopped before a plot of grass that was tinged with the red drops, as though the thing wounded had fallen here. But what could it be? The ghost? Yes; it must be the ghost; and the ghost must be human flesh and blood!

I hurried onward whither the crushed grass and broken sticks and upturned stones showed that the wounded creature had gone. Here a flat stone for a resting place, and there the prints of moccasin-clad feet, but I could not tell whether man or woman, for the prints were indistinct. But I pushed forward, bent on discovering and doing what I could for the one who had evidently divined my trouble and the unequal struggle and, hastening to my relief, had been hurt, while I escaped.

There was selfishness in my Samaritan work, for I thought by tracing the spots of blood and aiding the one who shed them for me, I could find the way to the Wind Cave which I had been searching so long and so

unsuccessfully. But no more of an opening confronted me than had heretofore. I had explored this part of the island, it seemed, until nothing could have escaped my observant eye. I had lifted and pried huge bowlders from my pathway, only to let them fall again where they had lain, as solidly imbedded as before: they showed me nothing except numberless tiny insects that made their homes beneath. I had almost begun to wonder if the leper had not misled me. But, no! That could not be, for had I not myself observed the compass and——

The maps! Why had I not remembered them before? Strange that I should have wandered around the island aimlessly for so many weeks, and not thought of the drawings that would have directed me to the very spot I was seeking. I started as if suddenly aroused from a lethargic sleep, as, in fact, I was, for my long illness had served to dull the past memories, as if trying to erase from my brain all impressions that had hitherto been made, and write new and more lasting ones. My mind was as a blank paper that had been written on with a pencil, making an unnoticeable impression, but only needing to be brought to the light to show the message—only to be

awakened as from sluggish sleep—as something that is covered with a thin but non-transparent veil that must needs be lifted to disclose what is none the less plain because hidden.

I now remembered clearly, and the marvel was that I had not thought of the maps before, but nothing in particular had come up to make me wish for them. I had explored to gratify my desires. I had wandered hither and thither, seeking what I would, pleased if I found it, not disappointed if I did not. It had only been since the episode with the pirates that I had strongly wished to find the Wind Cave and explore its mysteries—to find the one who came to my assistance on last night. It was not because I had not wished to find the cave whose treasures MacFayden had promised me, but which Nature, seemingly disputing the pirate's ownership, was bent on keeping hidden, for I had rowed around the island, explored every visible cave unsuccessfully; but I felt that I had all time before me, and if one day did not reward my search, another might. Thus weeks had passed, and I seemed no nearer the solution than at first.

But the maps! My face shone with joy as I thought of them, and I hurried away from the heap of rocks to the boats. But where, I

asked myself, had I left the papers? I could not recall. The last time I remembered having them was just before MacFayden had been encircled by the snake. If at that time they still remained in the boat, they must be there now; and I hurried on. But the boat that contained the crude drawings was the treasure boat. And it was sunk! However, I still had hopes that the papers might be intact.

As I hurried from the place where all traces of blood had ceased as miraculously as though the rocks had swallowed up the mystery, I noticed a small piece of white clinging to a briar. I looked more closely, then started back, then looked again. Satin! white, shimmering satin fitted to form a bridal gown! It must—yes, it must have been torn from the robes of my rescuer. Surely she was woman, not spirit, or her robes would have vanished with the dawn. It was woman!—woman to whom I owed my life!—woman who had shed her blood for me!—woman, human, pulsating, emotional and tender!—who had risked her life in my behalf—aye, more, who had ministered to me in my illness, cared for me as only woman can, nursed me when unconscious as tenderly as a mother would do—and, like

woman, left the rescued to guess, to study, to ponder—coquettish still, and of many moods.

Ah! the gratitude seemed to have doubled and trebled, that a woman, tender, yet brave enough to risk her life for mine, had been wounded! These great, crimson drops had been shed for *me!* Her delicate flesh was pierced, perhaps mortally, and I could not reach her, could not, by word or deed, inform her of my grateful heart, and let her ask what she would, I would grant it.

My soul was stirred as never before. Great, tearless sobs shook my frame; my heart seemed too full for tears; and, moved by a great impulse, like an avalanche that swept over my whole soul, I ran as fast as I could to the boat, to secure the maps, and find the wounded creature, and pour out my everlasting gratitude to her on bended knees.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

The maps were gone! Where I last remembered seeing them, now no trace could be found. Not a scrap of paper that in any way could reveal the deep and ever deepening mystery of the cave and its occupants. They were as secure from my intrusion as if they had no existence whatever. No clue was left by which I might explore the underground caverns, and bow at the feet of the mistress of the Wind Cave. Wounded! Yes, wounded and alone, without one friend to assist her! She who had shed her blood for me!

I prided myself on having a little of the chivalry that has ever been attributed to knights of past centuries, albeit I had no armor, no helmet and no sword to make myself appear more formidable and more ready to conquer any foe that I might but win a smile from a fair lady; but, lacking these, my heart beat more warmly in acknowledgement of a debt. But I was as far from my benefactress as though she had been a fair lady of

old, shut in the tower of her father's castle, surrounded by moats and ditches and armed guards and drawbridges, for, though I could trace her to the very rocks where she must have entered the earth, I could go no farther. No army in battle array could have been more formidable did I stand before them defenceless, for now I was as powerless as though surrounded with an impenetrable, unscalable wall that towered above me mountains high.

But I was not the one to dream, now that I saw no way clear. I would make a way into the bowels of the earth, and thus to my lady's bower. I would not sit idly by, and leave her to perish. I would move rocks, if need be, and go to her rescue. She should not have cause to call me ungrateful, if endeavor would do aught. Starting up, I procured my boat from its moorings, and pulled away from the shore, giving little thought to the treasure that was still wet with the ocean's brine. The maps and charts were gone, and what cared I for the treasures that were of far less value to me than the papers which I could not find. But, I bethought myself, was not the woman injured in defence of the gold, and could I so lightly value what she considered precious?

With a quick movement, I turned my boat around, and pulled for the shore. Springing lightly on to the sandy beach, I anchored my boat and made ready to convey the cargo from its watery bed to a place of safety. I toiled for a long time. The packages were heavy, and the boxes doubly so when dripping with water. But I toiled on, impatient at the passing moments. Then, to divert the attention of the robbers should they come again, from discovering the secreted treasure, I sunk the black boat where it had been, knowing that it would take the pirates longer to ascertain the loss of the cargo than it had taken me to unload. The jewels were safe in a cave of their own, and all trace of them securely obliterated.

With impetuous strokes, I again started on my tour of investigation, whither I knew not, but willing to be guided by that same instinct that governs the lower animals. Around the island I went, peering into every cavern that might contain an opening to the center of the earth. Although it was low tide, and many recesses, that had heretofore been hidden by the water, were now visible, a number of hours wore away ere I made a discovery that seemed to me at all apart from the ordinary. I rowed

nearly to where the death of the pirate had taken place, keeping as close to the shore of the island as the jagged, jutting rocks would allow, peeping anxiously inward to discern the mysterious entrance to the more mysterious cavern. An arched rock, with the ocean lapping it on one side, but projecting so far out of the water as to form a threshold as for a doorway through which one could enter the under world, attracted my attention.

Eager, expectant, I drew nearer, nearer to the entrance. My oars glided through the water, feathered, noiseless. To the front and to my left, I could see the great overhanging mass of ivy and vines through which the leper had passed for the last time, and through which one must pass to reach the entrance here before me, unless coming from the farther side as I had done. The rope-like arch appeared to me as the gateway of life and death. Some entered, and passed through safely, while others entered, full of life, only to find what e'en must come to all—Death. I had found Life, while my companion and enemy had met Death in the form of a serpent that had entered his Eden, even as it had done so many millions of years before. But did it not also bring an

awakening, and, perhaps, a fuller realization of things appreciative?

I peered through the opening newly discovered, and my heart beat more quickly as I looked and strained my eyes. As they grew accustomed to the darkness beyond, I could see that the cavern would lead one farther into the earth than any that I had previously explored. If this be the desired object, how near the owner of the reputed jewels had been to his destination! No wonder that he forgot all else in his near approach to the fulfillment of his desires! No wonder he was so absorbed in reaching the entrance that he was not conscious of a dangerous enemy at hand! To be so near, then be swept away from the fulfillment, even while the morsel dazzled one's eyes by its nearness!

But I could hardly sympathize with all the ecstatic excitement of the pirate, for I knew not what it was to worship gold as did he. I did not know what it was to murder for glittering gems. But I think it was no pretense at religion that kept me from it, for religious scruples I had none—only those that were instilled within me preceding my entrance into the world where I now resided. No doubt I could have feigned Christianity, as many do,

but in this I was a poor actor, and preferred not to profess what my everyday life would not uphold.

Cautiously I brought my boat nearer the entrance, and I wondered why I had not seen the arch before. But the water was lower now, the tide was out and left clear to view what had before passed as a rock projecting from the ocean's depths. I stepped out on the broad, stone threshold, and gazed around. The water looked black and dismal and bottomless. It was still, not a ripple, for the ocean had no influence here. It could beat its waves against the outside, but could not molest the weird quiet of the waters within, that, in their depths, mirrored the sword-like rocks that hung from the ceiling.

I uttered an ejaculation, and my voice echoed and re-echoed, reverberating in an uncanny manner, multiplying in major and minor keys as the sound waves came in contact with a thicker or thinner substance. I now noticed how high the roof was in places, while in others there was hardly room for a small rowboat to pass under, with one sitting upright in the boat. A peculiar gurgling sound attracted my attention, and I looked a few feet away from where I stood, to the right,

and saw that the waters were disturbed slightly as though a little rivulet made its way over the rocks, down, down to the depths below, where it formed an underground stream.

The immensity of my discovery filled my heart with joy. I could now explore to my great content. Here before me lay mysteries that were mine for the discovering, and who knows what I might not find? My object in coming here was almost lost sight of in my intense delight at the secret caves and passages that were only waiting to be explored.

To go farther, I must draw my boat through the opening, and use it for my motor power. I pulled and tugged, and at last succeeded in getting it through, at times almost being precipitated into the black water. I launched it within, and, oars in hand, started forward, my enthusiasm mingled with wonderment as to what I should find. Great caverns yawned before me on all sides, and I was at a loss to know which to penetrate. I resolved again to lay reason aside, and be guided by instinct. I paddled slowly, as if averse to reaching my destination too soon, and thus shorten the period of joyful anticipation.

I was feasting my eyes on all the recesses that expanded before my vision, and wonder-

ing what each might contain, when instantaneously the thought of my object in coming here flashed before me, and I quickened my speed. How ungrateful I felt myself! To be loitering while my rescuer must need assistance, even as I had; and she had not tarried!

With a quick stroke, I launched forward, and, in my eagerness, confused by the semi-darkness and the winding channels and projecting rocks, my boat struck a great bowlder, and before I was aware, I was precipitated into the eddying waters, and felt myself carried forward by a powerful current.

CHAPTER XIV

ONCE MORE ADRIFT

Stunned by my unexpected fall into the water, it took me some moments to fully recover myself. When I regained entire consciousness, I was being madly whirled along by the current that was too rapid to permit me to sink, for I recall wondering why I had not gone to the bottom like any other unconscious and inanimate body. But I was floating, or sailing, rather, like a tiny boat with all sails spread, moving swiftly before the wind. I was carried onward, onward, with an involuntary movement, lashing against rocks occasionally, or being scraped by the overhead covering that almost touched the water at times.

I moved my hands and feet in an effort to assist myself, but, someway, these actions seemed useless, and I concluded to remain perfectly passive. I was naturally, or acquiredly, a good swimmer, and, doubtless, this knowledge gave me confidence that I would not otherwise have enjoyed. Though I had not the

least idea as to where I was being carried, I felt sure that no effort on my part could avert the fate that awaited me, and I committed myself to some Power that held me in embrace.

All was darkness—black as starless, moonless midnight. I could almost feel the dense blackness that surrounded me, that penetrated my nostrils, mouth and lungs. I almost choked with the density of it. It entered my throat in great blocks like thick, black smoke from a steamer's smoke-stack, although the darkness I encountered did not have that gaseous odor; but I could almost feel it, and for the time it was appalling. It affected my every sense in a vain attempt to stop my breathing.

I wondered as I floated what could the gloom of the grave be like. Surely not worse than this. I felt that to awake after burial would bring to one for the few conscious seconds the same sensation that I now experienced; for I knew as little that I would ever see daylight again as the unfortunate one who is buried alive—weak, helpless, powerless—alone with God!

No: I did not feel so. I could derive no comfort from being alone with what Chris-

tians might say was a God. I was no Christian, though I did not disbelieve; but, a child of Nature, I could not bring myself to accept the prevailing idea of God. I believed in a Ruling Power that affected our destinies; I believed in Christ as being a perfect representation of the divine spirit of this same Ruling Power—purposely embodied with flesh that we mortals, of limited comprehension, might have a better and truer idea of the Universal Ruler—that we might more fully understand the heights of mortal perfection, as merging into the immortal. But Christ and God ever were, to me, separate and distinct, but divinely connected; and I could not conflict the two.

I often wondered, though not to excuse my own irreligious feelings, if one could not be a true follower of Christ and a lover of God, without formally bowing before a congregation containing a few Christians, some blasphemers, and many hypocrites—the majority vain and worldly—a few meek and lowly; or, saying a few prayers daily, that are not prayers because learned by rote, and therefore meaningless. I have often wondered, too, if one cry from a heart and soul in need of higher assistance and sympathy would not come nearer finding a response in the Great Uni-

versal Soul than all the babbling of a ritualistic service.

Whatever might be my idea of the Ruling Force, Prevailing Love, I could not associate Him with midnight blackness; rather, the light of noonday sun. I was alone! It would have been an impossibility to convince me that I was not, unless little devils had mocked and jeered at me from every corner and crevice of the rocks, or spat at me from the ceiling, now high, now low. I did not believe, however, that I had ever done anything to attract devils to me, for surely they, like vegetation, cannot thrive unless the soil be congenial.

Whatever I was, however much of a scoffer I might have been thought, no one could truthfully say that I was an ebony sinner. The one who came the nearest to thinking so was dear old Professor M——, of a certain Illinois college, who could not by hook or crook pound theology—*his* theology—into me, and wrote to my guardian, saying:—

"Take your ward from school. He does not believe in a personal God; and I can see no future for him. He will only corrupt my Christian boys."

Poor, dear, old theologian! I have often laughed over that; but my guardian was

grieved. He was a good earnest Christian, and he loved me truly, and I saw that my merriment pained him more than he could say. But, by the selfsame circumstance he was persuaded that I could never be a preacher or priest. We compromised: he to say no more concerning it, and I agreeing to attend the Southern Illinois Normal until I graduated.

Precious little good has my sheepskin ever done me, however, for with its presentation, I did not lose my wild and uncontrollable desire for adventure, and, when free, I was set adrift, my indulgent guardian admonishing me in gentle, but earnest tones, and pleading with me to change my ways and not be an "infidel" longer, not realizing that the best theologian extant, if believing contrarily to me, would be "infidel" to my belief. Sadly misused word! We are all infidels then, in a way, as scarcely two of us hold precisely the same opinion on things religious.

After I graduated, I hastened again to my own dear Blue Mountains, where I had lived as a child, leaving my guardian at his home in Chicago to worry over his wayward ward. I had what seemed to me an eventful life, but nothing as mysterious as the unlooked-for adventure I was now enjoying, and I could

not help but smile, even in my peril, as I thought what would not Professor M—— say did he but know where I was at the present moment. He could see no future for me! The dear man! he must have thought I would not have one, merely on that account; but surely he was not gifted with "second sight", or he would have seen me, at times bobbing up and down like a cork, at others floating like a dead fish in the underground river, going I knew not whither. He probably would have said, "To hell!", as fast as the murky waters would take me; then, fearful lest he had uttered an oath, he would hide his face in shame. But what if I should be bound for hell? I would keep his Satanic Majesty busy making padlocks I could not pick in my desire for adventure.

The awful blackness continued, but, after a time, I began to feel a pleasure in it—a desire to continue just as I was—though the monotony might have become unbearable. At moments, I felt my body going between rocks that came so near together that I could feel them on either side as I passed. Other times, I was compelled to make so short a turn that my head was barely through before my feet struck a rock. The ceiling at times was very

high, for the blackness was not so oppressive; again, it was dangerously low, and I was compelled to sink to the tips of my ears in order to avoid contact. At times, a wind from somewhere unseen, blew with terrific force over me. I was pleased with that, for it refreshed me, and I felt that although I was in an underground cavern, I was obtaining a breath of air from the outside world.

As I went onward, the current of the water became less strong; I could float more leisurely; the air was fresher, and the change was greeted with joy. The water I had encountered so far was cool to the touch—and *fresh*—for I had unintentionally tasted it; but, after I passed through what seemed to me as a great lake, the temperature increased, the water became warmer and warmer, and with alkaline properties. I was conscious of a vapor, or steam, that was constantly rising, and great drops gathered on my face and head. I was gradually, but surely, weakening under the heat, and I made several vigorous strokes, propelling myself forward, and succeeded in leaving the warm atmosphere behind.

I had, by my efforts, left the current that would, doubtless, have carried me into warmer water yet, until I might have encountered boil-

ing springs, but I paddled vigorously away from the channel, and, after a few moments, reached another large lake that grew cooler as I proceeded, and the air more refreshing.

I paused for an instant to feel my way, for I could see nothing yet, when I heard a voice —a whisper—an impression—"Come!" I immediately swam in the direction from whence the voice came, and I was conscious of being lifted by some force out of the water; and my feet struck ground once more.

CHAPTER XV

AN UNDERGROUND CITY

Hypnotism is an established fact—an unvarnished truth. But few, even those who practice it, can tell what it is. We may talk "mind over mind" till our tongues refuse to wag; and when we have finished, what do we know? Nothing! only that we have wasted words: we are no nearer the truth than before. However, we may all agree on this: that there must be a mind, or there can be no hypnotism. Dead matter, or matter not animated by life fluid, will not respond to the "operator's" art, though he use wiles and connivances innumerable.

After all, may it not be greatly more of electricity than mind? May it not be an invisible connection—a sort of wireless telegraph —between the "operator's" battery—the base of his brain—and the battery of his "subject"? To have perfect demonstrations, there must be a perfect connection; there must also be a complete circuit—a negative and a positive—

activity and passivity. If the "subject" should be using his battery at the same time the "operator" is attempting to use it, the demonstrations, or messages, will be far from perfect; in fact, there could be none. And if, too, the "subject" should possess the stronger will, or should make himself positive and irresponsive to the "operator's" suggestions, the hypnotist might exhaust his battery in suggesting, with never an answering message. But when the brain is passive, or receptive, the electric current passing from the hypnotist's brain will immediately connect with that of his "subject," and the instrument begins its click.

When hypnotism, mesmerism, or braidism, are demonstrated by an invisible "operator" on a visible "subject", then the condition becomes a trance; but it is as truly hypnotism as though the "operator" were of earth, while the demonstrations, as a rule, are more nearly perfect. A certain degree of harmony must exist between the hypnotist and his would-be "subject"—a certain amount of congeniality. At least, there must be no antipathy. It is an utter impossibility for a hypnotist to connect himself with one whose whole soul and mind rise in antipathetical vibrations that oppose with fiercest hatred any suggestions of his. As

well attempt the mixture of oil and water.

We must all admit that, at times, the science of hypnotism can recall scenes of the past—the long silent, dead, seemingly impenetrable Past—it matters not whether the scenes depicted are known in entirety to the hypnotist or not. A suggestion, a name, will bring every little incident as vividly before the "subject's" eyes as though he were actually living at that remote time, and a participant in the joys and sorrows of the inhabitants, and one in thought and mind with them.

After I was lifted from the water, in which I must have been nearer death than life, I, for a time, lost consciousness, or, more truly speaking, fell into a sleep in which I was partly oblivious of my surroundings, but more in a comatose condition in which I realized much, but could promote or prevent nothing.

When I awoke, which I did after what seemed only a few moments to me, I was conscious of a restful, peaceful sensation that had not been my lot many times during my life. A perfect content fell over me like a mantle. I knew I was not asleep; on the contrary, I was quite wide awake and alert to the slightest sound.

I was lying on a rock hard by the stream

from which I had emerged, and, on glancing up, I saw a man, almost a giant in height, approaching me. I am tall—have always been considered above the average height, as I stand six feet two; but the man who was approaching me was all of a head taller than myself. I knew instinctively, although I was prostrate and he was standing, that he could not have been less than seven feet six—if not more—and so thin one could almost believe him transparent. His long thin fingers were held out toward me as he walked. At first, I felt a strange aversion to him, but as he came nearer, that feeling lessened, and more of harmony prevailed.

I could dimly see, by a glimpse of daylight that peeped in from some small aperture hundreds of feet above us, that his face, though little else but skin and bones, was kindly, his dark eyes were expressive of gentleness, and the faintest gleam of a smile flitted over his features, almost transfiguring him. His long hair was thrown back from a broad and receding forehead, and fell to his shoulders in ringlets. His beard was brown, silky and wavy. I noticed that his teeth, as he smiled, were even, and of a beautiful whiteness. His long, slender nose was in keeping with his other

features. His eyes, deep-set and bright, were indicative of a scholarly mind.

I should not have thought him strange had it not been for his dress, which was utterly unlike anything I had ever seen—in texture as well as cut. The cloth, for such it appeared, looked to be woven in stripes—one stripe being of heavy, thick, coarse hair like that of a goat —the other stripe being smoother, and, seemingly, finer in texture, and apparently of wood fibre. The garment was not that of our time. It was neither the body-piece of the African or Indian, as it had more of grace and symmetry, though scarcely more of beauty. There was a piece that hung from the shoulders to a few inches below the hips, the same straight piece covering both front and back. It was tied at the shoulders and under the arms with a withe of the fibre that formed the smooth stripe in the garment.

The long, thin legs were partly covered by the two other pieces of cloth that were fastened at the waist and fell to the knees. These, too, were tied at the sides, the same as the upper portion, only these were wider, and gave perfect freedom for the movement of the limbs. From the knees to the ankles, the legs were bare, with the exception of a thick growth of

hair that looked unusually soft and fine. The same covering protected the arms from the shoulders to the wrists, but the hands, as well as the feet, were perfectly free from any of the hirsute growth, whatsoever. On the feet were tied something that served as sandals, but resembled pieces of bark turned up an inch or two at the heel to hold them in place.

As I glanced at the feet, spread out as they were on the pieces of wood, I was surprised at the grace and height of the instep. I had always heard that a high, arched instep is indicative of refinement and great intellectual capacity, though I never could see wherein the shape of the pedal extremities had anything whatsoever to do with the brain capacity, unless to show the extent of our evolution from our supposed forebear—the ape. If the theory be practical, I further mused, I may be looking upon a highly intellectual representative of a highly intellectual and refined race.

But whatever his object in coming to me, I could only wonder how he came here, and how many more like him inhabited the underground world to which I had unexpectedly come. I thought of the object that had started me on this unfortunate, or fortunate, journey, and wondered whether or not I had

been chasing a wounded will-o'-the-wisp who had lured me to this place. I thought of the fair one with regret, for, wounded, as she undoubtedly was, for my sake, I was as powerless as before to aid her in any way; and she might die unaided and alone.

The presence of the strangely clad man grew on me until he seemed to fill all space, and I had little thought else but to obey him. He did not command, else I had resisted; but I found myself assenting readily to any suggestion he might make. His dark eyes seemed filled with a wondrous light. They scintillated like an arc light, but ever growing brighter and more luminous. He had not touched me, but now he came forward, merely laid one long, slender finger on my forehead, and glided backward again a pace or two.

"You are living in the city of Bunavere, in the Year of the Earth the 101,000th."

I looked at him as though doubting his sanity, and for the moment a strong feeling of aversion swept over me; but when the statement was repeated, the soft, soothing melody of his voice eradicated once and for all the wave of antipathy. But, under his influence as I seemed to be, I yet had within me an argumentative feeling, as if I would make in-

quiry as to what he so positively stated. Whether my strange companion gave that to me, too, by suggestion, I know not, but it may have been the same characteristic that was born with me—not to accept as positively true what would not stand the crossfire of questioning—not to swallow with faith what reason bade me first inquire into.

The man knew my thoughts and understood what I wished to know, although I did not utter a syllable. He smiled pleasantly, and his whole face seemed to radiate light and wisdom.

"My son, you believe. You are living in the Year of the Earth the 101,000th! What you see will be written on your mind, and reproduced, that those who read may know that many, many thousands of years before any who now dwell on the earth lived, when they were flying through the atmosphere in atomic form, there was a great and mighty city here, built by human hands—the great and powerful Bunavere. Its people you will see; you will be one of them. You will live as they lived; you will see as they saw, and do yet see, for behold! the beautiful Bunavere rises before you in all her beauty! Look at her, for, surely, no fairer will you ever behold!"

"The beautiful Bunavere lies before you"

I arose and saw before me a great city, and, as my guide had told me, a fair one; but, gazing as I did from the heights where I seemed to be, the city resembled a miniature toy one, so small did its buildings appear. I gazed, enchanted, and as I looked, lo! the streets swarmed with people, like flies, going hither and thither, each bent on his mission, going in and out among the toy houses. The streets were straight and very wide. They were paved with something that resembled marble, and the paving shone white and glistened in the strong light. Occasionally a vehicle, no larger than a baby's toy cart, whirled along through the streets like a flash of lightning.

As I looked, I wished that I might see more clearly. Hardly had I formed the wish, when I heard, or felt, rather, my companion say "Closer!" And behold! the city was at my very feet, I soaring aloft in space that I might see the place in detail. Mighty indeed the city was, if acres constitute might, as miles and miles in every direction were houses. Away to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south stretched Bunavere—so perfectly and accurately laid out that not the least deviation was made from the four principal points of the compass. To the westward, rolled a river sil-

very and majestic. Here and there a shallow stream gave its waters to swell the flow of the grand river that accepted the tribute as its right, and flowed peacefully on. As far to the east as I could see was the ocean, not dotted with the islands that are now existent there, but all the land was united except where cut by the river and its tributaries that emptied into the ocean. No numerous isles and islands, reefs and cays, as now, but one stretch of land sloping away on both sides of the mountain range that intersected the country through the center from the northeast to the southwest a few peaks, snow-capped, towering heavenward against the sky, looking like great splendid pearls in a turquoise setting. Nestling halfway between the ocean and the mountains was Bunavere with its perfect architecture, looking as though Nature had worked in conjunction with the residents in contributing her most beautiful landscape for the location of this perfect gem of human artifice.

My guide walked among the people and conversed with them in their own tongue, which I first thought to be Spanish; but, knowing something of that language, I uttered a few words, but received no answer. They heard, but did not seem to understand, only

continued conversing as before, regardless of my presence.

I now walked about and looked at the houses. All of them were built of red cedar, as beautifully grained on the outside as the most fastidious would wish for an interior finish to the most magnificent dwellings. They were solidly constructed on foundations of rough stone or marble. They were large enough to be comfortable, perhaps from six to twice that number of rooms, but not great massive affairs that required overmuch labor. No two were alike, and as I gazed from one side of the street to the other, and glanced at the residences as far as eye could see, the originality, as well as the skill, of the architects impressed me as almost superhuman, for each dwelling seemed even more artistic and nearer the standard of perfect beauty than its predecessor.

The doors of the houses were unusually high; but I did not wonder at that when I noted the residents, for they, like my guide, were of an extraordinary height. I found myself enchanted with the people, and eagerly watched them going in and out through the doors that swung to and fro. There were no locks, no bolts, even on the outside doors, but each one honest, believed his neighbor so, and,

evidently, his trust was not betrayed. The roofs of all the dwellings were of some bright shining metal, and as I approached nearer, I saw that it was the same that we now call aluminum.

But what seemed remarkable to me was that I saw no chimneys exuding great black clouds of dense smoke that mar the beauty of our cities of modern times. I wondered at this, but, whether my strange companion knew my desire or not, he did not inform me, doubtless for good reasons of his own. But one little item could not hold my attention long at a time, for there were so many things new to me, and splendid in their newness, that I needs must hasten lest it fade from my sight.

I could not understand the slight worry that accompanied all that I saw, but over me continually hung a cloud of suspicion that the scene would not last, and each moment I was looking for some one to change one stereopticon slide for another. But hardly had I formulated this suspicion into one of tangibility when that same, sweet, musical voice I had heard before, said, "You are one with us!" And I immediately understood, and mingled with the people.

As I entered the city streets, I thought I

had never seen anything more beautifully clean. A good old German housewife might have looked on the pavement without a shudder, and compared it favorably with her own well-kept hardwood floors. I was enchanted with the cleanliness, more impressive, perhaps, because that had ever been lacking in our modern cities. I now saw that the paving was what I had thought it to be—purest Italian marble. The center of the streets was of red and colored stone, fitted together in diamond shape; the walks, that corresponded to our sidewalks, was of the whitest marble, with not a grain of dirt thereon. I could not cease wondering at the perfect cleanliness of everything; but where could they obtain any dirt to mar the streets?

The interior of the houses, I surmised, must be equally clean, and the residents themselves models of neatness. But where, I wondered, are the horses and the carriages that traverse the country round about? Surely they could not avoid contact with the grime and dirt of the earth! Or—I laughed as I thought it—am I a part of a city not connected with the earth? Am I a denizen of another world? Else why these deceptive appearances?

"Go and see!" said a voice. I went, I knew

not whither; but I seemed to have been transported to the suburbs of the cedar city, and on, outward, until I reached the very limits. And there I saw, as if one had guided me to the fulfillment of my desire, two buildings, one on either side of the wide, cleanly street. I walked to the archways that served as doors, and there stood and beheld one vehicle after another, and row after row of them, standing side by side, horseless carriages that were being cleaned by many men evidently employed for that purpose.

On either side of the carriages were shallow trenches which were cemented, and into which the loam, that had collected on the wheels from their transit through the country, fell; but the quantity of dirt was so small that ordinarily one would not pay the slightest heed to it. I could not resist a smile at what seemed to me as labor wasted; but I watched eagerly to see what became of the handful of dirt in the trenches. When each wheel had been cleaned with cloths that resembled chamois, and polished as new, the pressure of an electric button brought a gushing stream of water into each trench, and the dirt was carried out far away from the city's limits, to the ocean beyond.

I was amazed at the facility of everything. The carriages, as fast as restored to their former beauty, were whirled away, one after another, propelled by electricity, to the central part of the city where, I was informed, a great square in the city's heart, covered over and surmounted with a dazzling dome of aluminum that I had noticed before, and wondered at, was set apart for the storage of these vehicles. Surely, thought I, here in this underground cavern reside peoples who far surpass all others in their knowledge of the fickle wizard, for the carriages, some two wheels, some four, others six, and still others great, grand, cushioned coaches that would carry a large party, were all perfect in their workmanship.

I had not yet seen an animal, and the matter puzzled me, especially the absence of the horse. Though not needed for the auto-motors, most assuredly, yet in some way I felt a lack, and attributed it to the absence of the beast of burden. I determined to ask one of the employees, and thus satisfy my curiosity. "What! have you no horses?"

"Horses! horses!" he said slowly. "What are they?"

I explained as best I could, but the task

was not an easy one, for in all my life before I had never been called upon to describe the horse, and I fear that I blundered sadly. But I made him understand that the chief qualification of the animal was its propelling power.

The man laughed heartily. "As fast as these?" and he touched two vehicles lovingly. I shook my head. "Then what should we want with them? We go forward, not backward."

I nodded, for I understood perfectly. They did go forward, and had progressed to where we may be some time during the twentieth century. I resolved to ask concerning another matter that had puzzled me, although I knew it was a childish question; but I was here to learn, and I was not the one to make the least of such an opportunity, if curiosity would bring me knowledge. From my aerial heights, the roads and highways all looked as though paved, but I may have had a wrong impression. "Where do you get your mud?" I asked. "Are not your roads paved, as the streets?"

Motioning me to a carriage, he said, "Take this, and ride. See for yourself."

I shook my head. "Your master might be angry," I suggested.

"Angry!" he said laughing. "Master! Sir, these belong to the city; and *I am a citizen!*"

I could not gainsay him, nor did I try. Bunavere was certainly run on co-operative plans, and in this conclusion I found I was right. The residents, my companion informed me, were all equal in station and wealth, with one sole exception; and of the exception I was to hear more later on. My guide, who had so lately been cleaning dirt from the city's vehicles, was also one of the city's law-makers: he was merely fulfilling his duty in promoting the interests of the loved Bunavere, and considered no work, either manual or mental, beneath him. Each man, in turn, performed any labor there might be to do, and considered himself honored. Each one owned his own home——

"And can you sell it?" I asked, thinking altogether of the commercial part of it and my own craving for adventure.

"Why should we sell? We could not live elsewhere. Here we are as one household, and does a true home-lover ever willingly leave what he loves most on earth? Much less for greed would he break his own heart-strings!"

"But the growth of your city! How do you provide for that?"

"With greatest ease. No two families live under the same roof; therefore, quarrels and bickerings are unknown among us. When two

birds mate, Nature furnishes them material for a nest. Bunavere does the same."

I was not yet satisfied. "Do not your people, some of them, find it monotonous to be provided for in this way? Would there not be more satisfaction in looking after one's own interests?"

He turned on me a face which I thought expressed as much scorn as surprise, but his tone was not in the least scornful as he replied: "This is not a city of selfishness. We experience the same pleasure in working for one another that a true husband and father experiences in providing for his household—not a duty, but the most delightful pleasure. A developing soul never finds life monotonous. Monotony comes from measuring one's duties by the standard of some one's else, to the belittling of the former. We use our own standard of measurement, and we have no disappointed ambitions. We all beautify our homes and grounds according to our highest ideal, and are all satisfied."

Turning abruptly, he motioned me into a carriage, and quickly stepping in after me, we were whirled away.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ELECTRICAL STUDY

I could not conceal my surprise at the speed of the vehicle we occupied. It was going as fast as an express train, and from my companion's actions I was led to believe that this rate was nothing unusual. The gauge that he occasionally regulated seemed such a simple affair, yet he assured me that a hair's breadth either way would make a vast difference in the increase or decrease of speed; but the little handle, when once set, falling into a groove, was not easily shifted from position. The motor power looked to be much the same as that of any other electrical vehicle, although the battery was unusually small, but of seeming great strength, occupying little space, but answering the purpose to a nicety.

Had we been rolling over a carpet of heavy velvet, we would have experienced as much discomfort as we did in our horseless carriage riding over the smooth, well-kept roads of Bunavere. The road-bed was of fine gravel, but over this was a mixture that resembled

cement, firmly holding the foundation in position. Beneath the gravel, my companion gave me to understand, was a foundation of the red cedar with which the country abounded, "Enclosing," he said, "the wires."

"Wires!" I said in surprise.

"The circuit wires," he explained. "We will make a stop here. But have you noticed our bridges?"

"I have not. Where are they?"

"We have just now crossed one."

I looked intently, but saw no sign of a bridge, and neither felt nor heard a hollow sound in crossing.

My new friend smiled. "We make our bridges as we do our roadbeds—of cedar, gravel and cement. They are firmly held in place by numerous pillars."

"You never suffer a washout, then?" I commented laughingly, thinking of the many disasters in my own country caused by the power of high waters. But I had to explain.

"No;" he said, "these bridges have been like this ever since I can remember. We could not afford to go to the trouble we do, then have our work ruined in an hour or so by the waters we should control."

I wondered how far out the paving

extended, and if the roads all through the surrounding country were similar. As if in answer to my question, came the reply:

"Bunavere is paved like this for fifty miles out."

"And how far have we come?"

"Forty miles," he answered, looking at another gauge near the little crank that regulated our speed.

"In how long?"

"Fifty minutes. We are slow!" He then turned the handle, and had I not grasped tight hold of the carriage sides I would have gone out over the front; but my companion was perfectly composed, as one accustomed to such feats, and hardly changed position as the vehicle was brought to a full stop. My head swam, and I felt queer, but I instantly regained my composure.

On both sides, the beautiful country stretched before us, the dark green of the vegetation looking blue against the sky. Here and there, a brook, a stream or a river wound its way in and out, looking like a silver serpent in an emerald Eden. Little lakes nestling in the embrace of the mountains, warmed 'neath the ardent kisses of the sun. Many miles beyond, I could see a town; and, still farther,

another. How many miles it might be to the farthest, I did not try to guess; but with the excellent mode of travel these people used, distance mattered little. The roadway was many feet above the surrounding country, affording a splendid view of the magnificent scenery; and I could not but marvel at the amount of labor it must have taken to make the highroad what it was.

We started on again, more slowly; but within an exceedingly short time, we reached the terminus of the paving, although one could hardly tell where one left off and the other began, so even was the road beyond. Men were working among the cedars below, piling lumber on the wagons. While I gazed, two loaded wagons climbed the steep embankment with the greatest ease, looking almost supernatural as they climbed, apparently with no assistance. The men were extending the paved road out and beyond, but a day's labor could count for but little, as the task was so thorough.

As we were returning to the city, by another route that intersected at right angles, which road was taken that I might get a fuller view of Bunavere and its surroundings, we met two other carriages that, in their rapidity, gave us

little time for observation. A single occupant was in one of them, while the other vehicle held two people; and it needed only a glance, influenced by instinct, to show me that one of the latter, a beautiful creature clad in white robes, with hair and eyes as black as the raven's wing, was a woman—the very first I had seen; and I could not truthfully say that I saw her. The roads were broad, allowing eight or ten carriages to move abreast, if need be—a very necessary provision in this city of electric motors—and one could not always get the best view of people met on the highways. But I was delighted to see someone unlike the peculiarly dressed men, all of whom were clad as the first who had led me to this place.

"The Consul-in-Chief and his wife," said my companion, referring to the occupants of the second carriage we had met.

I nodded, as though I thoroughly understood, awaiting a more convenient time to investigate. I was too much occupied with the elegant homes and their artistic suroundings to bother myself with affairs of state just at the present time. As we reached the city limits, on entering, my companion regulated our speed so that we went quite slowly, that I might see and admire to my heart's content,

the combination of nature and art as exemplified in Bunavere. Trees of numerous kinds bordered the streets at equal distances, offering their cool shade to the passers-by. Parks, beautifully laid out with flower beds of every shape, containing rare and priceless flowers of every hue, were numerous, where fountains played, reflecting rainbow colors. Birds of wonderful plumage drank and bathed in the rippling water, as tame as domestic fowls. Every home had its wealth of flowers, its hanging vines, and I noted with increased interest that no two were arranged exactly the same; here, the tendrils of the delicate cypress clung to an arch; there, a climbing rose with its wealth of fragrant blossoms, formed an arbor; here, a bed of flowers in diamond shape, scented the air; there, a circle or a square, or an octagon, all blooming profusely.

Six-wheeled wagons, loaded with fresh vegetables and tempting fruits, were making their way along the streets. Four men were with each wagon, and they were busily unloading at every house, apparently knowing beforehand just what was needed at each place. Oranges, pineapples, breadfruit, cocoanuts, bananas, nectarines, and other tropical fruits were left at each residence.

"A prosperous business!" I suggested, only to hear what my guide would answer, for I was beginning to understand the plans of this charming city.

He looked at me, and, catching the twinkle in my eye, laughed heartily. "From our family orchards and gardens," he replied. "Nothing selfish—all general—each labors for the good of the city—all share alike."

"None feast while others starve, then?" I asked.

He looked at me inquiringly. That was a condition he did not understand, much less comprehend—a condition unknown and impossible in this city whose plans were not for self, but for others' good. "All share alike!" he repeated vaguely; but he had answered my question.

We had now come to a magnificent residence, or palace, rather, for, though it had all the appearance of a home, yet, too, it had all the elegance and grandeur of a palace. It was built of pure white marble on a foundation of red stone. Twelve broad steps led up to the great massive doors of wrought-iron that swung noiselessly to and fro as people made their entrance or exit. A square tower stood at each end of the building, only of a slightly

lesser height than the great central dome. Archways and doorways innumerable added beauty to the structure. Exquisitely shaped windows, with colored and painted glass, gave a tinge of color to the white palace. Some of the windows served as canvas whereon forms of cherubs were painted, entwined with flowers, with a holy and celestial expression; other windows had pictures of birds painted with rare skill in natural colors; and still others held perfect imitations of flowers and musical instruments. The court was equally as magnificent as the palace, with its well-kept shrubbery, its aromatic plants and trees, its lovely flowers, its marble walks and paved driveways, and its electric fountains playing and at all times emitting vari-colored lights.

As I gazed speechless and enchanted at this triumph of architectural art, a man coming down the steps attracted my attention. A shiver swept over me as I recognized the one who had come to me at the water's edge—the first of these strange people whom I had met. He merely glanced in our direction, then glided on, the robe of white that covered his dress flowing many feet behind him as he walked. I thought I noticed an aura of whitish light that emanated from him, forming a circle

on the ground and round about him. I rubbed my eyes and looked again: the circle of light was there! brighter than the sunlight, and with more of whiteness.

"Lovidorosa," said my guide, reverently. "With us, yet not of us."

"What do you mean?" I asked, not understanding either his words or his actions.

"The guardian of our Chief Consul whose palace you see," said my companion, still mysteriously. "His prompter in government—no longer matter, but spirit—who departed from among us——"

"The Chief Consul?" I queried.

"Lovidorosa," came the answer.

"Lovidorosa is here! Is not that he who goes there?" I said, somewhat sternly.

"Yes: with us, but not of us." And he relapsed into silence, nor did he say another word until we arrived at our destination—the cleaning buildings, as I chose to call them. As we rode through the archway to the place allotted our carriage, a tiny bell with a silvery sound rang out from somewhere, evidently announcing our arrival. A messenger just then arrived, said something in low tones to my companion, then hurried away. The message,

whatever it was, affected me, for my guide asked me to alight, stating that another would attend me.

I stepped down and stood near by, while my companion prepared the carriage for a dash up town. He inspected the battery, from force of habit, doubtless, as it was automatic, readjusted the regulator, and turned the vehicle about. He then stepped to the side of the building where innumerable ends of wires were seen, and inspected a tablet that looked as though it contained the record of something. He looked at it, then murmured to himself, "To Los Vestas!"

I was curious to know what he saw there, and made bold to step up and inquire if he had spoken to me, though I knew he had not.

"No: I merely wanted to see where the Consul was going."

"The Consul! The man we met out here about thirty miles?"

"The same."

"How can you tell by this affair?"

"Look, and I'll show you. You remember that I said the cedar was placed in the road bed not only to form a foundation, but to protect the wires?"

"Yes, and I wondered at it, for I could see

no use for wires, inasmuch as your telegraph is without wires."

"No? Well, this tabulator here shows the direction of every vehicle that leaves or passes here, records the number of miles traveled, every stop and every turn. If there is an accident or mishap of any kind, we know it here instantly. It is telegraphed to us by the wires that are vibrated by the means of the electric current, which vibrations are magnified by the passage of a powerful battery over the road. Our own speed today was slow——"

"Slow!" I exclaimed, as I thought how near I had come to losing my breath. He looked at me wonderingly.

"Yes, slow!" he answered. "We went not a mile a minute, while it is nothing unusual for us to go one hundred miles an hour, and oftener a half more than that."

"But are you not afraid of friction under such high pressure?"

"Not at all. Our carriages are all made to stand the force of our exceedingly small, but powerful, batteries, and we take care that no friction exists. Look here!" and he pointed to the hub of a wheel—"See this self-oiler. A constant drip, drip of oil keeps the axle in perfect condition. The quantity of oil is placed so

that when needed it will exude just what is necessary. It is on the same principle as the water fowl that has its oil sac always filled ready for pluming. This oil receptacle, you see, is protected so that nothing will contaminate it, thus giving the spindle the pure lubricator all the time. Our batteries give us force to go as fast as we can ride, and we would be slow indeed could we not plan to keep the friction reduced."

"Yes," I said dreamily, trying to comprehend it all. "But how long have you used your present batteries?" I hated to concede that these people who dressed so queerly were far in advance of us, and I hoped that he would say a year or two, but——

"One hundred years! Step here, and see one of our former batteries, or what remains of it. We keep it for curiosity."

For curiosity! Great and powerful stars! that thing was more nearly complete, and much simpler than we have ever used; but in this land of electricity, it was even now a curiosity, while we have been struggling to attain to even that. Here they had batteries, self-charging, or automatic, and small enough to lie peacefully in a quart cup, but yet powerful enough to propel a vehicle over the road at the rate of

nearly two hundred miles an hour. And why? Merely because all these men were wizards, and were hundreds of years farther along than we in the understanding of that great universal force—that producer of light and heat—of dryness and moisture—of beauty and fragrance—of life in general.

I could not fully understand why these people had made such wonderful discoveries, but I was to be convinced later on that close application to one line of thought from generation to generation, handed down from father to son, and to the son's son, is the only true method of solving the world's great problems, and the great hidden mysteries that are mysteries only because unknown and incomprehensible to us from our not having progressed far enough to understand what is made plain when illumined by the light of understanding. We are groping in the dark, with only here and there a bright radiant star visible, doing its utmost to give us sufficent light; but we must e'en die before the work is accomplished and leave for our children to do what, from lack of penetration, we have left undone; and they must work until dawn when the light of the sun throws its radiance on all, and the mysteries of the dark have become knowledge in the light.

CHAPTER XVII

LOVIDOROSA AND I

I was still speechless, wondering over an unsolvable problem, when, looking up, I saw before me the kindly face and figure of Lovidorosa. He smiled, and his countenance was very pleasant to look upon. I greeted him as though I had met an old friend. In some way, I felt that I was being honoured, for, from the reverence and respect shown him by my late guide, I knew that I now had for a companion one who was above the ordinary in knowledge and position.

"You have been well entertained?" he asked considerately.

"Marvelously!" I said with enthusiasm. "The knowledge of electricity possessed by your people is beyond my comprehension."

"You do us too great honor," returned my companion; "for you have vast, undeveloped powers that are now like an uncultivated field —like the site of Bunavere before it was drained and filled and planned and builded,— a great, marshy valley that has been trans-

formed into the thing of beauty that it now is."

"A wonderful piece of work!" I exclaimed rapturously.

He smiled. "You have the plot of ground, but it needs filling up in places, obstructions removed in others, and cultivated and developed. You have seen little of our work yet, and that is why I have come to guide you; but it was my wish that you see the simplest first, for I believed you could understand that, and would be better able to comprehend what I have to show you."

"The simplest!" I thought; what can be next? I felt like an infant afloat on a great sea, endeavoring to grasp something tangible, with great waves lashing round about, threatening to overwhelm me at any moment. I stretch forth my arms and cry for succor; I lift my eyes with a reverence that must be instinctive, to this being near me, who is so much greater in knowledge than I can ever hope to be—this man, who, with his kindly beaming face so full of wisdom, smiles at me, a poor, ignorant worm of the dust!

The ways of this people were, as yet, incomprehensible to me; but I was determined to put forth every effort, to fill all my vacant brain-cells adapted to this purpose—the count-

less unoccupied ones will give me constant occupation, I fear—until I could, to a degree, understand the great power that governs this mighty city. Mighty? Yes, mighty I felt it to be, though in a modern sense it might have been looked upon as a child's toy—with its row after row of houses, neat and beautiful, street merging into street, broad, white and red, with spotless purity everywhere. But, in some way, Bunavere assumed such a grandeur as I had never seen; the peoples' faces irradiated something higher, something purer, something beyond me. Although their dress was so uncouth, so barbaric—I could but wonder, however, just what constitutes barbarism, and if costume has aught to do with it—yet in the beauty of their intellectual countenances, that was entirely overlooked, and I felt myself in the presence of my superiors. I was awakened from my reverie by the kind, gentle voice that now seemed to have become a part of me:

"I do not wish to impose upon you, my child,——"

"My child!" No wonder he called me child, for with him I was naught else.

"—but when you grow weary of it all——"

"Weary!" I cried. "Weary of being with

you?" And I turned such an astonished face toward him that it was no wonder he smiled. Weary of being with this man; weary of having him impart wisdom to me! Never! I felt that I could live with him for all time—here in this peaceful city, among its intellectual, peace-loving inhabitants—here I could live and learn, forget the past—in truth, I felt that I had no Past, for all was Present, Present and Future—and I *lived!*

"But hear me, child"—again that voice! that dear expression!—"hear me out. I do not want to mislead you: you are living in a city built by human hands many, many thousands of years before you on the earth began to calculate time—thousands of years before your wise men believe that the earth, as a planet, existed; when many of them believed that this globe was flying through space in trillions of atoms; before it was called together by that Great Force that created all; before a Voice breathed among the molecules and attracted them into one great mass, then by a breath sent the ball whirling through space again, attracted by that powerful electrical body—the sun—and caused to rotate and revolve, cooling as it rolled. Then a little pigmy race was started. How long, think you, would it

take to populate the earth, beginning with one male and one female, and allowing for the natural deaths?"

"Natural deaths!" I exclaimed, entirely ignoring a part of his query, and answering only what impressed me most. "Death was caused by sin of our first parents!" I said, although I did not fully believe what I affirmed.

Lovidorosa laughed. "You are not sincere. So long as there is life, there must be death. But what is death? Merely a transformation—resting of matter; at least, to our sight, it rests. But it is all the time taking on a new form, changing, beautifying. A body may decay, and beautiful flowers spring up over the grave; the electrical forces are gathered again into space, drawn into the sun, purified and returned to earth; the gases escape; the lime becomes a part of earth; and each part of the body is attracted to its origin again. Nothing is lost: all obey the law. That law was not, however, that this body of clay should live forever, and retain this wrinkled, mouldy condition; it is a part of the earth and there it must return. Sin had no more to do with that fixed law than your actions or mine of to-day had. So long as your people cling to

that idea, they will fall behind in the train of intellectual thought; they will also persist in shifting the responsibility of their deeds from where it properly belongs—on themselves. Sin is discord and ignorance—a note out of harmony; but it behooves us to play at all times our sweetest and most harmonious strains. Discord will not be acceptable when we understand concord. Inhabitants of other planets have long ago abandoned that idea of the origin of sin, and are progressing, while you are moving but slowly—too slowly—for the march of progress is so swift that others pass you, precede you, close in around you, and the gap where you walked is refilled and you are left behind. I want to show you many things that when you return you can impart your knowledge to your fellows."

"But how? I cannot remember all I have already seen."

"My child, summon to your aid spirits of the air, little electric bodies that move where they are attracted. Call upon them to aid you, and they will rush to your assistance and fill in the vacancies of your memory until you can formulate plans of what you here see. These sprites will gladly come, if called; they merely wait a beckoning. I will aid you, too.

Call for Lovidorosa—that is my name—and I will come."

"How is that possible when you live here?"

"Lovidorosa knows no limitations: he goes wherever electricity penetrates. Electricity penetrates all things; therefore, Lovidorosa goes—he and his sprites."

I looked at him, bewildered. "And these sprites?"

"Atoms of electricity—formerly a part of man's brain. After death, these particles again permeate the air, ever ready to fasten themselves to an earthly brain that they may grow and increase in strength, at the same time aiding the mortal to a clearer insight."

"What of the soul? Is that naught but electricity? Or has man a soul?"

"*Man is a soul,* my child. Soul is the center. God is soul, around which all centers. Soul is the infinite part of man that binds him to the Infinite."

"But electricity! is that synonymous with soul?"

"It is not. Soul may exist without electricity: but electricity without soul, *never!*"

"I have always thought, though, that electricity is a force, and soul——"

"Soul force," interrupted the sage. "Soul

is our identity when we are released from our earthly condition. By soul we know each other."

"What of the form, then? Pardon me, but I am curious. I do not understand."

Lovidorosa beamed on me, not with a patronizing air, but as an interested teacher who delights in giving instructions; though he doubtless knew the extent of my knowledge before I asked a question, yet he replied as willingly as though I had been his equal in wisdom. "You are but an infant. Look at me! You gaze on one who has been released from earthly environments for many hundreds of years. I take the form I once had that my loved ones here may recognize me. You would not look so astonished did you but fully understand. Were my people all released I need not assume the form I do: they would recognize the soul. But their eyes are yet heavy; they cannot fully discern the finer forces."

I now understood what caused the peculiar sensation I experienced when near Lovidorosa, as in the presence of a superior being. I understood, too, the remark of the other guide—"He is with us, yet not of us."

"Why?" I queried, "why do you still remain here? Is there not another place?"

"Paradiso!" he exclaimed. "Or Heaven, as you understand it. What is either but a satisfied condition of mind? I am satisfied here, and so long as my work calls me here, and so long as one of my descendants remains in the flesh in Bunavere, I remain. Afterwards——"

"Where?"

"I will gravitate to that condition for which I am fitted—to which I have attained. That worries me not, for the Great Central Soul will regulate that. At present I wish for nothing more than to aid my fellows—to suggest where their ideas fall short—to unfold and assist until we attain perfection. What need have we for another Paradiso? We have it here in that perfect oneness, in the unfoldment of our souls according to our ability. I have the advantage: I can glide through realms of space where electricity attracts me, and there learn ideas new to me, and return and impart my knowledge."

"Are you the only one of your kind in this city?"

"We are all of a kind, child; but I am the only one now who is so fortunate as to be released from his fleshly environments. I am appointed to instruct; I am only fulfilling my mission. But, come, we must hasten!"

As he said this, a dazzling light shot across the sky, and I looked up. My companion raised his eyes also, and stood staring into the sky. Though it was midday, and the tropical sun was at its brightest, the daylight could not compare in brilliancy to the light above. It was as though the heavens had opened their great doors, which extended entirely across our range of vision, and revealed some of the beauties within. The blue canopy was drawn apart and held back by invisible hands; and through the aperture, and beyond, I could see dazzling beings floating and gliding through space in a flood of silver and golden light. Three times the curtains of blue were drawn apart; three times they closed. Then, with wondrous rapidity, a star formed in the very center of the sky, and gradually increased in size until each point rested on the horizon. The many colored lights that shot from it were wonderful to see. It was as though thickly studded with gems of every hue, each magnifying in brilliance and brightness a hundred fold. Five white doves, one from each point of the star, met in the center, fluttered for a moment, then flew away. Slowly the star arose, growing fainter and farther away.

I glanced at my companion, who had not

moved. He still stood with uplifted eyes, the light playing across his bronzed and noble face. As the star grew dimmer, he stretched both hands upward, wistfully. The star again lowered until it hung directly over us, and a voice from its midst whispered in sweet and distinct tones, like the tinkling of silver bells —"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The star vanished, and Lovidorosa, with a serene and satisfied countenance, looked at me. He offered no explanation, nor did he refer to the emblem, although his expression convinced me that he was not altogether void of understanding.

Immediately a bell sounded, then another, and another, until five had pealed out; then the most musical sounds it has ever been my lot to hear, fell on my ears—music, rapturous, sonorous and heart gladdening—music, sweet, ethereal, divine—penetrating all space—vibrating every heart chord, as though played upon by cherub fingers, exciting admiration, joy and delight—now deep as the rolling of chariot wheels to battle—now sweet as the play of zephyrs across the harp-strings of a wood nymph—now gay as a troubadour of old in the presence of his lady—now loving and

caressing as the cooing tones of a dove.

I looked at Lovidorosa for an explanation, and saw that benign face radiant with a holy light, and even in the brightness of the noon-day sun, I noticed scintillations, at once blinding and inspiring, emanating from his very soul. The music ceased all too soon. "It is a part of each day," he replied. "You have noticed the great central tower that stands in the very heart of our city?" I nodded. "And the four others, one at each cardinal point?" I nodded again. "Within each of those towers is an instrument of music, attuned to electricity, and dedicated to the electrical god; and every day, when the central point in the firmament is reached, that great electrical body yonder favors us with music grand and glorious, ever changing, and ever new."

"And may I go to those towers? I would see——"

"That is one thing that is forbidden you; they are sacred. Enjoy the music and forget the musicians."

"The musicians!" I exclaimed. "And who——"

But Lovidorosa made no reply, only hastened me onward the faster.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RISEN STAR

Night was deepening over Bunavere, if a city illuminated by thousands of electric lights, making it brighter and more radiant than the lightest day, could truthfully be said to have a night. But call it what you may, Bunavere, at the hour of twilight, became the gayest of the gay, increasing as the hours of night came on. The day, in comparison, was like a chrysalis, hiding its inward beauties from the sight; while night was the butterfly, gorgeous in colors of black and gold, azure and crimson, and blending of harmonious colors, from the faintest pink to the carnation of a blushing maiden's cheek. Doors were thrown ajar, and everywhere could be seen radiantly lighted homes—electric light and electric warmth—where feasting and merrymaking were carried on, where children laughed and played with skilfully made toys, many of which it is impossible to describe, having nothing with which to compare them. There were miniature houses and cities, carts and motors, trees and plants; there were birds and flowers of every

hue; lilies that opened like a cup, displaying tiny birds of gorgeous plumage within; musical instruments that did not rasp and grate, but soothed one with their melodies. But I saw no representation of animals, and could account for this in only one way: they had no animals to imitate. Perhaps this people, I mused, had advanced beyond the age of animals. Perhaps there was nothing in their natures to create a desire for them; so studious, spiritual and intellectual that animals and animal magnetism were not necessary to their existence. Is it possible that when we, too, have grown wiser and more advanced in spiritual knowledge, that we will have progressed beyond the animal age?

But I could not long meditate while such a panorama was passing before my sight. Young girls,—the first I had seen in this city of wizards,—with dark, clear complexions and flowing dark hair, crowned by long, white veils and garlands of roses of every color, danced along the street, singing sweet songs of love and innocence to the accompaniment of a small harp that could be easily carried; others cried their gratuitous wares, miniature bouquets, garlands and wreaths of superb roses, twining them around their lithe bodies, over their flow-

ing draperies—loops and ropes and knots of roses covering the fair creatures from raven heads to sandaled feet.

Past these beautiful, singing, dancing girls, on through the crowds of youths and maidens walking arm in arm, Lovidorosa and I walked, every one, even to the tiniest child capable of consciousness, making obeisance to my companion whose face shone with radiant light, his eyes, apparently of white flame, emitting rays of purity, earnest and searching.

Everywhere was merriment, everywhere was revelry; but everywhere was the pleasure of innocence—the pleasures that only the white-souled can enjoy—the pleasures that the Recording Angel delights to witness—pleasures in which young men and beautiful maidens joined with that sweet abandon of childhood. Nowhere a rough sound, but everywhere harmony. Nowhere a vulgar, unfitting word or act, but everywhere perfect freedom—free because of the chastity that inspired and covered all.

Bands of little children, flower-crowned, glided in and out among the crowd, singing gay, bright songs, or laughing and chattering merrily; or, marched by twos and threes, carrying pliable, braided ropes of exceptionally fine,

silk-like fibre, which I at once recognized as the essential element in the clothing of the men, even to the robes of Lovidorosa and the Chief Consul. The clothing of the women and girls, as well as that of the tiny children, was of silk; and, being desirous to know from whence it came, I spoke of it to my companion who told me of the universal culture of the silkworm, whose production was considered as a fitting apparel for loved women and children, but too fine for the sturdier sex.

Electric vehicles, decorated with vari-colored flowers, radiating a blaze of light, moved noiselessly along the streets, beneath arches emblazoned with tiny lights peeping out from the center of roses and lilies, giving one the impression of a firefly settling down to enjoy the sweetness of the flower, emitting its light meanwhile.

Star-eyed women walked gracefully along, their draped robes falling in folds about them; or sat smiling on luxurious couches near the doorways, conversing with a bearded, giant man, or playing with a cherub that clung to her neck, burying its face in the folds of her robe, or scenting the sweetness from her perfumed hair, laughing in glee the while. Truly, the Maker of All must consider this people the

fairest of His creation! With eyes and hair dark as midnight; beautiful skin as smooth as ivory, but with that richness of bloom that is given only to those who have lived beneath the tropical sun, where the coloring is at its best; ruby lips that courted kisses, innocent and loving, superb figures and graceful movements that reminded one of the fabled goddesses; aye, truly, this is the most perfect work of the Creator! Here women were held as queens; here was their kingdom with many willing worshippers; here her reign was perfect, her power supreme.

Lovidorosa and I were silent as we walked onward with the crowd. As the hour grew late, all turned, and, with more subdued voices, marched onward in one direction, apparently with the same object in view. I, who felt as though in the midst of the glories of Paradise, was in raptures. I took whatever came, asking no questions, and wondering little. All seemed in such perfect accord, all in tuneful harmony, as if fitted for the place it occupied. All seemed as though a part of a great plan, perfectly carried out—a program that was being fulfilled without any break or discord.

All at once a flash as of a grèat city on fire, shot across the heavens. I looked up and be-

held the five large towers ablaze with light from base to dome, as though each was a torch. From each of the four outer towers, a great, round light, like a huge snake, but everywhere of the same thickness, connected with the central tower. I looked toward the residence of the Chief Consul. It, too, was alight from the solid foundation to the uppermost piece of marble. Ropes of electricity outlined the roof, gables and towers, window casings and doorways. The painted figures on the windows themselves were each outlined with lights reflecting the many colors of the glass.

Instantly, what seemed like great avenues of music opened up, and volume after volume of the most glorious harmony floated on the night air—volumes that seemed concealed in the pent-up years of ages past—coined from old masters who lived and died millions of years ago—coming from the very bowels of existence —from the center of the universe. Great waves of harmony rushed toward each other, merged and rolled on, forming an ocean of music that rose and fell in exquisite vibratory sounds.

Oppressed by the grandeur of it all, I stopped and clasped my hands in delight. I, who never was a Christian, who was never religious, involuntarily exclaimed: "Surely, only

a people who have known Christ could accomplish this! Only God-worshippers could comprehend it all!"

Lovidorosa turned on me a look of pity. "Child, you speak in riddles! Much excitement has turned your brain."

"But know ye not God? Christ?" I cried earnestly.

"God—electricity—the Great Controlling Force—the Great Central Soul!" he said, solemnly. "Yes: we know His power; we see His works. That is all anyone has seen. We recognize a master hand behind it all; but we call it electricity. But Christ we know not."

"Christ is the Son of God!" I said, with great earnestness and power.

"So are we all," said my guide, who foiled me at every turn. "The nearer we approach to our ideal of the Over-Ruling Power, the better for us. No one can be more the Son of God than he who lives up to his highest ideal."

"But Christ—the beginning—the Saviour of men—the Intermediate Power——"

"You are living in the Year of the Earth, the 101,000th," said Lovidorosa, with impressive earnestness, but very tenderly, as though instructing a child in ways of right. "Little one, the connection between our souls and the

Great Central Soul, is perfect, and our messages sure. We need not a mediator. A mediator must needs come only to those who have severed connection with the Central Soul—whose batteries refuse to act, because practically dead. If souls draw themselves away from the Center of All, and break the connection, they must be re-connected. Doubtless, that was the mission of the one of whom you speak. We are perfectly connected; therefore, know not your Christ." And peremptorily closing the conversation, he walked on so quickly that I almost ran to keep pace.

Onward we went, onward until we came to a magnificent structure built of the same beautiful red cedar, polished and grained. The foundation of white marble glistened in the light. Columns of pure white marble stood at each of the four corners; and a marble arch spanned the doorway through which the people were now surging, not pushing or crowding, but marching as though on parade. As the first entered the doorway, a chant was commenced, and everyone—man, woman and child—sang, the thousands of voices blending in perfect harmony, now rising and swelling like the voice of the sea, again growing fainter and farther away until a mere whisper was heard.

All bowed in adoration as they walked beneath the arch. I could distinguish the voice of Lovidorosa above all others, not that he was nearer me, but his voice was of great volume, clear and penetrating like the lower notes of a grand organ. It was from him alone that I caught the words of the musical chant:

Unto thee, my people, do I wonders reveal;
Unto thee, my beloved, I give the seal,
The key of the future. The present and the past
Are now but fleeting shadows, too dim to last.
Unto thee, my people, show I wonders supreme;
On thee, my beloved, I, the Great Soul, will beam,
Show you marvels now hidden your powers will control——
Wonders that lie dormant in the depths of the Soul.

From out of the far distance, I heard a deep voice, sounding at once both near and far:

Lovidorosa:—
Come, all ye people, prostrate bow;
People: (bowing):—

O, loved one, we salute thee now.

Lovidorosa:—

Salute not me, but a Higher Power.

People:—

Loved one, we adore Him from this hour.

All (chanting):—

He is the power on land, on sea;
He is to heaven and hell the key;
He is supreme of powers that be——
The All-Absorbing Mystery.
Alleluia! All praise! All praise!

The last syllables had just been uttered in a sweet, penetrating staccato, when I looked around to speak to Lovidorosa. But he was gone! Where? I looked wildly about me in the huge building, for, with the crowd, I had entered it. A sense of loneliness almost overpowered me. I was alone! although thousands were near me, passing me, touching me, but still alone! I knew nothing better to do than to follow the example of others: to find a place in the building where I could observe.

The exterior view of the structure did not impress me as being unusually large; but the interior vastness was appalling, as thousands after thousands filed in and seated themselves all around the sides of the building, where row

after row of seats was placed, like an amphitheatre. From any part of the house, the center of the structure was visible. Music emanated from everywhere—grand organs, swelling with an invisible power, played divine harmonies.

In the center of the temple—for such it was—was a platform of white marble that glistened and glittered in the rays of light. From this platform, rose an altar that, flower-covered, shone like so many iridescent lights. Around this altar, whereon rested a great book with cover and leaves of gold, were four, huge wings that restlessly waved to and fro with the slightest breeze from the door, or with the great electrical power that filled the room; I could not tell which.

As the wings moved, lights of every color shone through them or irradiated from their surfaces. One moment they would be golden, another silver fading into white. Again, deep crimson, dotted with gold and silver spangles, like the wings of a gorgeous butterfly, blending into fainter and fainter pink until scarcely a hue of rose was visible; again, from amber to deepest yellow and orange, flecked with rose, gently waving like live things. Occasionally, one could catch a glimpse of the beyond, re-

vealing myriads of other wings, faintly waving, softly moving, like beautiful angels on guard.

The magnificence of this central scene blinded me for a moment, and I did not see the figure standing on the platform. My heart leaped as I recognized Lovidorosa. He placed one hand on the altar, and rays of every hue darted throughout the length and breadth of the temple. He raised his eyes heavenward, and the great dome was ablaze with light. Flowers, aglow like living fire, hung from the corners of the room, or were festooned from dome to column, and from column to archway.

Instead of the peculiar dress Lovidorosa had worn, he now was clothed in a robe of shining white that sparkled and glistened as the wings moved to and fro and the rays of light touched the silver threads in its making. His long hair and beard looked like so many fine white threads of light. His grand, beneficent face was illumined until it shone with a divine fire. His eyes irradiated warmth and wisdom, as he smiled kindly on his people and on the children who passed and unloaded their sweet burdens of flowers on the platform at his feet. Others strewed stemless roses along the

aisles, making a pathway of sweet-scented flowers and filling the great building with fragrance.

Lovidorosa, in the midst of this grandeur, with the light playing caressingly on his kind face, looked the disembodied spirit that he was. If a faint wave of incredulity had swept over me when he told me that he was no longer of earth, that doubt now all disappeared, and I looked upon him as being what he claimed. Such a divine insight of knowledge and things spiritual, reflected on his countenance, that I, like the other spectators, was struck with awe, though I, of all the great assembly, seemed not to fully understand—I alone was not a part of the multitude—I was detached—a thing apart—while they, each and all, even to the most infantile, flower-crowned head, somehow had a part in the great plan of this mighty, but gentle, ruler. A feeling of sadness crept over me—a feeling that seemed to fill the vastness, as though some great, unseen event, an unavoidable calamity, were about to transpire.

In the distance, the grand organs swelled, seemingly responsive to Lovidorosa, for with every movement of his, the tones vibrated more intensely, or almost died away in a plaintive cry of mingled joy and sadness. Louder

and louder again they rolled until the building was filled with vibrations of harmony, sounding as the roar of the sea, or the incoming tide, with wave lashing against wave, piling higher and higher until the magnitude was almost oppressive; then, ere we were overwhelmed, it gradually grew fainter and fainter, until a part of our souls seemed drawn from us in a vain, wistful, yearning desire to embrace the music and make it a part of us.

As the volume increased again, great doors, heretofore unseen, near the dome and almost directly above the central figure, opened, and revealed a pathway of light that, shining into the brilliant room, was yet powerful enough to reflect its brilliancy. With tense and anxious faces, all looked up, and there beheld vast numbers of white, shining lights that moved as though controlled by will. Some hovered near the radiant head of Lovidorosa; others, in the distance, were seen coming nearer and nearer, attracted by some force we could not see. Rays now formed and in some way were connected with the central figure, uniting with his magnetism and surrounding him with an aura. An exceeding brightness surrounded his head, as though he had been crowned with the silver glories of Paradise.

Lovidorosa looked upward toward the opening, and, in answer to something that none of us seemed to hear, bowed his venerable head. Turning toward the people, he spoke, and the rich, sonorous voice filled the temple as the tones of the organs had done. A breathless stillness now pervaded all, that every syllable might be heard.

"My beloved," and each heart seemed to tremble, waiting to hear they knew not what, "for long I have labored with you. For long, you have listened to my words, and obeyed my slightest mandates. For long I have happily tarried with you, instructing you even as I was instructed in other worlds than this. For long, we have been one people: we shall still be one. I am called, loved ones; I have seen the emblem; my mission is e'en now finished. Weep not," he gently remonstrated, as each head bent low in suppliance and sorrow; "ask not to have me stay longer with you, for my time has come. Did you ask that I remain, I e'en must go; and your grief will but rend this heart and soul of mine; it will but decrease my electrical forces, for, by the power of attraction, some will remain with you, lest you give me a willing departure.

"I beg of you to allow me to go into the

fields of my future labors with my fullest capacity—into the fields that are now opening to me, where others, more than you, are in need of instruction. The Great Soul attracts me, and even though you mourned my departure night and day, I could not remain with you, for the force that attracts is the Great Central Force; and to it I am called. My heart is almost torn from me as I sever the cord that binds, but, my beloved, I will meet you in greater fields of wisdom—where greater capacities for development are furnished—and where we will all be, as here, one people. I am called, but sorrow not; rather rejoice. Would that I could take all my beloved with me! Would that we need not be separated even for a time! Would that I could draw you to me——"

With a crash that shook the great structure from foundation to dome, the pathway of light opened wider and wider. Great bands of white-robed beings came to meet the man who was no longer to remain with us. He threw back his head, stretched forth his arms, and gradually rose. The very earth was quaking as the people, terrified, looked upward and watched their loved one pass beyond their reach. Some bowed and silently wept. Others

wailed aloud and gave vent to their grief. The lights instantly went out and left the multitudes in darkness. Sounds like the roar of an oncoming storm were heard. Thunder rolled and pealed. Sheets of fierce lightning flashed through the open doors. Quakings that shook the structure, were felt. One shock, more terrific than the rest, rent the temple asunder, and through the great openings could be seen flashes of vivid lightning from out of the awe-inspiring heavens. People shrieked and rushed for the doors, falling in their hurry and darkness. All the while the thunder roared like hundreds of wild beasts caged.

I, silent in terror and wonderment, stood alone. The crowd surged by me, but never touching me, in their wailing and crowding for the open door. One side of the building collapsed, shutting off the exit. Cries of terror rent the air—then a stillness. Small bodies of light floated through the air, some more brilliant than others; and, remembering what Lovidorosa had said, I recognized them as the electrical part of the ones who now were no longer of earth, who had been crushed by the falling walls. Other atoms of electricity joined these, until, like so many fireflies, they floated about the room. I watched intently

and saw two unite and merge into one, though two separate and distinct. I wondered, but as I did so, I saw others do the same. Some remained alone, strong and lustrous. Others, weaker, shone but faintly. Tiny little white-robed creatures floated about, and I recognized some of the tottering little ones who had crowned their curls with flowers. Evidently, they did not have to go through the electrical process, but took forms at once, and were, from the moment, spirits.

As yet, not one thought had I given for my own safety, so interested was I in watching the developments. The four great wings, as yet unharmed, appeared spectral in the flashes of lightning, constantly waving, softly moving. A distant roar, increasing as it came, now rent the air. The remaining walls toppled. The roof fell, burying thousands more in the debris. Shrieks and supplications rent the air, and more and more little lights rose. With a wrench that shook the earth, the entire building became a mass of ruins; and I somehow gazed and saw it all.

The atoms of light were now attracted, one to another, some in twos, and others alone, but all forming a brilliant figure that took the form of a star. I watched as it rose higher and

higher, increasing in brilliancy, and saw radiating from it, in scintillating letters—"One people." The heavens parted as they had done in the morning, the star disappeared inside, the great blue curtains closed again. I gazed in wonderment and awe, and as I gazed, a light brighter than the sun veiled the blue. I still gazed, and the sky tinged to faintest pink; and there in letters of burnished gold, appeared the words:

"Ships shall pass where mountains have been; fishes shall swim where men have walked and cities have flourished; for, verily, even unto the ends of the world, no other peoples shall dwell where these, my chosen, have tarried."

CHAPTER XIX

BUNAVERE

For hours I must have lain in a stupor, though, for aught I knew, it might have been only moments—or years, for I realized nothing. After rousing, I was conscious that I had been stunned in some unaccountable manner; and my unconsciousness was the result. I was bewildered for a time, but on gaining my full senses, I remembered all—clear and distinct. Again, I saw the beautiful city—ye gods, how beautiful! Again, I saw the brilliant illumination, the dazzling light, the fairest of women, the purest of mankind; and, oh! ye gods, how vividly I remembered Lovidorosa and the risen star. I was thankful that I had beheld, even for so short a time, such a blissful Paradise, and had heard the harmonies that can come only from instruments manipulated by angel fingers.

A feeling of deep despair seized me, and I determined to rise and view once again the site where Bunavere stood, and locate the ruins of the great structure from which the star

arose. I attempted to rise, but fell back weak and exhausted. I bemoaned my fate, knowing that nothing but the great bowlders and endless caverns would hear and echo my cries. I felt that I had lost all—had gained e'enmost the gates of Paradise, only to be repulsed and turned away, falling lower and lower until I reached the bowels of the earth. I had seen a city flourishing; I had seen it submerged, and its people saved. I had seen mountains inverted, and the waves of ocean roll where they had once towered upward to the sky. My heart longed for my beautiful Bunavere—mine because I had been the only one to gaze upon its beauties, for the inhabitants were a part of the city itself.

"O, Bunavere!" I called. "Bunavere, my own! come to one who loves you. O, Bunavere, my beloved! let me view your charms again; and if you perish, let me perish with you! Bunavere!" And my voice ended in a heart-rending wail.

"Bunavere!" called the rocks one to another. "Bunavere!" cried the walls of the caverns. "Bunavere!" rippled the water, joining me in my vain cry for my loved and lost. "Bunavere!" was taken up by the winds, and wafted through hollows and hills in this underground

Giving a cry of joy, she clasped me in her arms

world. That one sweet word was the echo of all their cries.

Tormented and grieved beyond endurance, I collected all my forces and rose to a sitting posture. I held out my arms wildly, despair on every feature and in my voice: "O, Bunavere! Bunavere!"

Softly and gently before me glided a maiden of ravishing beauty, her long, black hair flowing in wavelets over her shoulders and over the white satin gown she wore. I gazed at her stupefied, speechless. Was I again in Bunavere? Here was a representative of that race; here was one still left to comfort, to remind me that all was not taken from me. Nowhere outside of Bunavere could such a wondrous beauty be found. Nearer and nearer she came, gently gliding, barely touching the pebbles with her white sandaled feet, her satin robe of Grecian drapery falling in folds about her lithe form.

As she gazed more closely at me, coming nearer and nearer until I could feel her warm breath on my cheek, see her lustrous eyes looking into mine, I returning that gaze as though fascinated by it, a bewitching smile overspread her face, and, giving a cry of joy, she clasped me in her arms. "And you called me—you

called Buna Vere!" she cried exultantly. "Buna Vere has come to you, child. I had mourned you as dead; but here"—and she gazed wildly about, and shuddered—"here is the very spot he threw you. Child, Buna Vere has called you many times, and you came not. But Buna Vere had to wait till her child called her; then her heart heard, and she came quickly, gladly, like one on air. My child, my child, you are found! restored to your own! My love has grown with our separation. I have not tired in my search for you. Though ofttimes weary and sad, yet I have searched all these many years."

"Years!" I echoed, wondering if I had been an inhabitant of the beautiful city for years. Was I now an old, gray-haired, gray-bearded man returning? I put one hand up to my face; it was just as smooth as before; not a stiff hair roughened my fingers. I surely could not have been away so long. What did she mean? But she must know. I lay in her arms, making no resistance to her embraces, her soft, warm kisses at times falling on my face like rain. Closer and closer she drew me, straining me to her breast like a mother loving her child, gazing into my eyes with hers full of holy love. At times, as I earnestly watched her,

I noticed a brilliant glow flash from her dark orbs, like little red flames that meant destruction to whatsoever attracted them.

"Child—my child!" she murmured. "My long-lost child! But he could not keep you from me always. I know my babe would come back to me as full of love as before—would come back and let me fold him in my arms and kiss him so. When I heard that cry for which my soul had waited and longed, I came with the speed of the winds—I came—even from ——" She interrupted herself by her cooing and loving.

It was sweet to lie in this beautiful woman's arms, to be kissed by her full, red lips, to be devoured by the dark eyes through which her soul glimpsed, to be strained to her white breast and be encircled by her tapering arms. As she talked, I became more bewildered. Was she the deluded one; or was it I? I gave her the benefit of being mistaken; but, doubtless, it was I. I had called wildly for Bunavere, and this beautiful creature had come in response. Was she a strayed inhabitant of that lost city? Was she the embodiment of that whole people? Was she the star—the risen star—embodied in the form of one of the most marvelously beautiful women I had ever seen?

I felt that I must break the spell; but how? Would it be possible for me, bewildered as I was, to give a rational account of myself—to disclose my identity? I could not see my way clear, for here I was in a cavern unknown, lying on the bare rocks, fondled and caressed by the fairest of nymphs. And why not enjoy the novelty awhile, and let her undeceive herself?

I looked into her eyes, and they shone full upon me with such depths of love revealed that I was quiet. A thought flashed over me: I had believed her deluded; but is not that always true of crazed minds—to think themselves rational and all others insane? My heart filled with terror. Perhaps I was the deluded one, and this exquisite specimen of human flesh and blood was right. I decided to let her have her way, for as yet, I was not averse to being coddled and caressed, petted and kissed by an angel of beauty. She patted my head, kissed my hair, and murmured in soft, cooing accents:

"My child! my love! How well I remember these curls—these beautiful curls! Ah! are they not damp still with the kisses I bestowed upon them long, long ago! They did not forget. See how they curl around my fingers! They, too, love me. My precious child, *he*

could not keep you from me always. *He* could not separate us. Cold, cruel, heartless demon! I throttled him; I would have choked him had my strength held out. I would have leaped after you, child—would have snatched you from the embrace of the perilous cavern—but I could not—all was dark—dark—oh! terribly dark—and I fell. His soul will burn in hell —in a thousand thousand torments for his act. But he did not kill you. You returned when I had almost given up hope. See! I wore this robe—I crowned my hair with flowers—I adorned my throat with jewels—for you."

"You are beautiful! No angel in Heaven fairer!" I managed to say.

For this, she clung the tighter, and I relaxed in her embrace. I tried to imagine myself a child that I could the better enjoy her caresses, for they awoke in me memories of long-departed days. I closed my eyes in sweet content and tried to imagine her my loving mother. She saw my lids droop, and, changing her voice to a low coo, she rocked me in her arms till I entered dreamland.

When I awoke, an odor of inviting food met my nostrils, and, reaching out in the half-darkness, I grasped some viands. I had not realized how very hungry I was until I smelt the food.

As I half rose from the rocks that had been my bed, from the hemlock that my companion had gathered for my pillow during my exhausted sleep, I saw more fully what had been prepared for me. A consciousness, each moment increasing that I had eaten the same kind of food before, came over me. There were tropical fruits, a turtle's egg, the crisp green that somewhat resembled lettuce, the luscious potato, and cold, clear water that tasted as if it had just come from icy mountain regions—all, even to the dishes of bark, showing the touch of gentle woman's hand, and reminding me so vividly of my convalescing period when lying on the shore in the shelter of the rocks, Was it the same angel hand that was feeding me now? Was it the spirit of the Wind Cave? the one who saved my life? the one who was wounded for me?

God! could it be that after all my searching, after all my adventures, my endeavors to find her, I had been miraculously thrown on her mercies again? My heart leaped with delight that I now could have the opportunity to tell her of my gratitude—to thank her—to tell her how much and how often she had been in my thoughts—that my coming here was in search of her. I sat erect. I stared into vacancy. I

leaped to my feet, and started out to find her; but in a calmer moment, I returned, sat down and waited, for in my excitement and my wanderings I might lose all trace of her. I might go in the opposite direction from which she took, for I knew not the ways of the cavern. I would not run the risk of again losing my jewel, now I had found her.

The force of her sacrifice and devotion grew on me, and my soul filled with joy. How sweet to have such an angel guardian, more beautiful and bewitching than any houri that roamed through the gardens of Paradise. To please her, I finished my dainties, and drew the rude dishes to my lips and kissed them, for had not she, with her own hands, fashioned them—and for me? I drank of the cool, refreshing water, every drop of which cooled my heated blood. I sank back on the hemlock she had gathered, pressing it tenderly to me, and thought of her. Sweet Buna Vere! Beautiful beyond my wildest dreams! Oh! could I but have her love and her caresses in a way that was satisfying; but I must not hurry. It was pleasure to have her love me as she did, although she was doubtless laboring under a delusion. But who is she? I would ask her when she came again, if it would not frighten her.

I knew by my former experience that she would take herself away if she suspected I did not need her; but now—now, perhaps it would be different, for she loved me, loved me as her own. And was I not? She it was who had twice rescued me; and she it was who was my humble slave, yet one I would fain worship as a queen. Buna Vere, the fair—the embodiment of a departed race—the sole reminder of what once was—Buna Vere, my own—my companion—my devotee—my guardian angel. O, Buna Vere, I love thee, love thee!

I heard a light footstep, and, sitting erect, I beheld the angel of my dreams coming quickly toward me, loaded with hemlock boughs. I forgot my intention to be an invalid that she might care for me, in the desire to assume her burden; and I arose and ran quickly to her, taking the load on my own shoulders and linking one arm in hers.

She smiled sweetly. "You naughty child! is it not a pleasure for me to work for you? 'Tis no work; 'tis the pleasure of love."

I smiled, too, down into her dark eyes, and said: "And do you not want me to share that pleasure? Think you not that it is a supreme delight for me to carry your burden—you who have done so much for me—you who have

saved my life——" My long, pent-up fountain of gratitude was flowing. I threw the hemlock down, and, grasping her soft, white hands in mind, I knelt at her feet. "Buna Vere, it is I who should be the slave; it is I who would willingly surrender to you the remainder of my days, did you but permit me to labor for you, to care for and protect you. See! I am your servant. I kneel at your feet in supplication. I pour out the gratitude of my heart to you, my beloved Buna Vere!" I clung to her waist, my whole soul in my eyes.

She knelt beside me, and, throwing both arms around my neck, kissed me fervently, I returning kiss for kiss, sipping the dew from her rosy lips. Surely the fervor of my emotion must awake her from her delusion; but, no!—

"My child, speak not to me of gratitude, I who bore you, who held your little head next my breast, every beat of your tiny heart responded to by my own, I who yearned and prayed for your return. My prayers have been answered—and you are here. Think not to deprive me of the joy of caring for you. You are mine—all my own. Is it not so?" And she drew her head near to me, till her eyes met mine, still clinging to my neck.

I grasped her more tightly in my arms, and

strained her to my breast. "It is true, Buna Vere; I am yours, heart and soul!" I cried fervently.

"And body?"

"And body. But are you not mine, too?"

"Child, you belong to me—and to God—to no others. You are mine—mine to pour out my love and devotion to. I am yours, yes; but a mother is possessive; a child is the thing possessed. A mother offers her life for the child; but the child is never called upon to make that same sacrifice. You see mine is the greater ownership. You are mine, and I am yours; but I possess." And she laughed like the rippling water, her voice gurgling and bubbling with mere childish delight. She had found heaven again, and could I be the one to destroy her happiness?

I kissed her, and smoothed her dark wavelets, and she cooed in her joy. I talked to her gently, and she rested in my arms. I drew the hemlock about her, warming her, until the relaxation of her soft body told me she slept. I looked down at her face, tinted with red; at her white eyelids, long-fringed; at her clear-cut features, her sweet mouth, and at her dainty hands, one of which now lay idle in her lap. I feared to move lest I wake her. She had

found what she had been yearning for all these years, apparently, and her tired, restless spirit was now in repose.

I could have cried out with the blissful joy I experienced in holding this loved creature in my arms—she a queen, I a courtier to whom she had deigned devotion. I could have clasped her to my bosom in my delight, but a sense of her purity overcame me. I would endeavor, little by little, to undeceive her, and, if successful, the reward would more than recompense me for my patience and pains; if not, to live with her in this cavern, to obey her, to caress and be caressed, to be all hers, and be cared for with a maternal devotion, would be more of heaven to me than anything else on earth. It would be joy supreme and eternal: to be all hers, and she mine.

CHAPTER XX

THE WIND CAVE

For hours I held my loved burden, her dark head sinking lower and lower on my shoulder, her raven tresses almost hiding the sweet face. She lay perfectly motionless in my arms, no sound, but her soft, regular breathing, denoting that she slept. She was like a tired child that, wearied with pleasure, sinks to sleep from sheer exhaustion, a smile of content on her face, showing that her spirit, even in sleep, communed with the one who had brought her happiness.

As she slept, I marveled at our being here, and wondered how it all would end. Could it be that we would live forever here in this cave, apart from the rest of the world, sufficient unto ourselves? In the newly awakened love that I had to acknowledge—the very first of my life—I was content; but would it be right to hide such a jewel away from the world? But, love argued, she has lived here, evidently for years, and now was perfectly content, inasmuch as she had found what she had been

searching for. But, however much I might desire to have her here to myself—however much I acknowledged I loved her—reason and my better judgment would not let me be satisfied. I must do what I could to bring her to a true realization of things—must bring her to understand matters as they existed.

When she realized all, might it not be that she would not love me? Was it not because she believed me to be who I was not, that I received her warm kisses, her sweet caresses, and her undivided devotion? And did I rouse her to her normal self, might she not turn against me and hate me for my pains? I was troubled. The situation was peculiar, and I must come to a conclusion alone, for there was no one in whom I could confide—no one to hear my woes—no one to assist me. I must reason —I must solve—and alone! Yes, despite an inner voice that was as feeble as a new-born child, alone!

Buna Vere awoke with a startled expression on her countenance. In my reverie, I had not noticed her nervous twitching and irregular breathing. "Oh! it is you, child! I am so glad—so glad!" And she snuggled tighter to me.

"Did you dream someone else held you?" I

ventured to say, but fearing I might startle her.

"O, no, no! But—well, it is all gone now." And she rubbed her forehead vigorously. "How foolish when I have my child again—my love!" But she evidently had not satisfied herself. "I thought I saw *him* swallowed by Satan,—annihilated, body and soul. And such terrible screams! Oh!" And she clasped her hands tightly over her ears.

"Buna Vere, you had a bad dream; that is all. See! there is no one here but me—no one but ourselves—Buna Vere and her love. Let your dream pass. Laugh. Let me hear that dear voice in merriment, for I am here now, and nothing can harm you. I am strong, and will protect you even till death."

"Even till death!" she murmured; "even till death! And afterward, child? afterward?"

"God," I murmured softly, though I had little sincerity in what I said.

"Or His opposite?" she asked, with a peculiar smile.

"No; not that," I protested. "Don't think of that. You are too good—too full of love. I will protect."

"From shadows? from specters?" she queried. "Have you power there?" I was silent. "They are my foes. They creep

around, and hide in caverns and crevices, leering at me. Sometimes they are snakes, sometimes, distorted human shapes. *He* always appears as a hideous creature—half man, half reptile. I cannot see why he should bother —how he could come—for he is not disembodied. But why did I dream he was annihilated by the devil?"

"My sweet, let us not talk more of your fancies and imagery. Forget them, and remember you are with one who loves you better than life. And you love him, too, do you not?"

Her face cleared instantly, and such boundless love was expressed in her eyes that my heart leaped. "There is no measure for maternal love," she answered. "God is the Fountain-Head, and from Him we draw our supply. A mother's love surpasses all other love, except the Fountain from which she draws. There are no words that will describe it—no gauge that will measure it. If, in return, her child loves her, she is amply repaid for all worry, pain and anxiety. She has a full recompense."

"My Buna Vere is fully rewarded, then," I answered.

"Yes; and *his* plans are foiled. He is loser at his own game. He, whose rightful owner is

Satan—— But, oh, how wicked I am!" And she hid her face on my breast.

"Who is *he?*" I asked. "I will shield you from him."

"No, no!" and she shuddered violently.

I said no more, but let her settle her own fears. For a few moments she lay thus, then, rousing herself, she sprang to her feet, her eyes bright, her face clear as sunlight.

"Have I found my child only to kill him by fasting?" she said, laughingly. "I must away!" And she started to leave me, but I grasped her white robe.

"Buna Vere, I am strong; let me go with you," I pleaded.

"No, no! Obey me; stay here!"

I determined not to yield, even though it be hard to resist her loving commands. "If you do not let me go with you, you may not find me here when you return," I said, quite seriously.

She turned on me such frightened eyes, so full of anguish, that I was sorry for what I said. She trembled piteously. "I could bear anything but that. Come!" And she held out a hand to me, which I clasped tight. She grew calm under my touch, and we hurried along together.

As we walked, a few rays of light fell across our pathway. I looked up, and there, angling in and out, here a turn, there a straight line, I beheld, many feet above us, an aperture that let in the daylight, and which, from its distance above us, looked exceedingly small. On, on, we went again, till I heard water gurgling, rippling almost at our very feet. I stopped. My companion's childish laughter rang out.

"Come, brave knight," she said, chidingly, "methinks when you cross this stream as many times as I have done, you will go forward with as little fear. See!" and she put one small, sandaled foot on the narrow stone pathway with which nature had bridged the stream, and, looking around, laughingly beckoned me on.

Stepping on the bridge, I went forward as heedlessly as she had done, following the sparkling will-o'-the-wisp wherever it might lead. As I went, the mad waters rushed just beneath my feet, the spray dashed around as though just under the narrow bridge the waters leaped below to a great depth. I paused in midstream to listen. Far, far down, splash, splash went the water against rocks that obstructed its course, foaming and frothing the while. The steam that arose was suffocating. I felt faint

and dizzy, and, doubtless, would have fallen and been carried away by the current of the rolling, tossing stream, had not a touch, a linking of a hand in mine, drawn me forward.

"'Tis dangerous to tarry, child," said my Buna Vere. "Know you not that this is one of Satan's allurements?"

"How so?"

"A legend is rife that this current connects with the regions of His Satanic Majesty," she said; "a stream that has lured many to destruction. Once pause, you are almost sure to be lost. Walk boldly, and you defy him and his allurements. Heard you not the fall the terrible waters make? It is just so, I have heard, until it reaches the devil's domain, getting hotter as it descends."

"I think that a man's life would be extinct ere he reached the infernal regions, were the water much hotter than here."

"Ah! yes, physically; but of all tortures, that of the soul is the worst. Physical endurance is short, but that of the soul endless—ah! *endless!*" And she hissed out the last word with hatred. "Do you think he has gone this way to hell?"

"I hope so," I answered; "and is now furnishing a holocaust for the king and his cour-

tiers. But from whence comes this stream? What says the legend?"

"That is unknown. A few paces upward it is entirely spanned by sharp, ragged stones that bruise one's feet and jag the flesh, until one has to give up and come to this crossing. And no more is seen of the stream."

I wondered, and yet I did not, that Buna Vere had crossed and re-crossed this bridge many hundreds of times, doubtless, in her wild search for something—her child, perhaps; but in her delusion, that idea might have originated from nothing—only a wild fancy of a maddened brain. And *he,* whoever the man might be, had something to do with her condition and her disordered mind. Whoever he was, she hated him with as intense emotion as she loved me.

We had crossed the stream, and were now ascending a hill, carefully, cautiously, for a misstep might precipitate us into the mad waters below, and, if the legend be truth, send us hell-ward whether or not. My companion held tight to my hand, and we climbed upward, upward, until the ascent now ceased entirely. Pausing a moment, we regained our strength, and, turning half-angling to the left, proceeded. As we did so, I heard a rumbling,

whirring sound, as of an oncoming tornado that seemed to be beating against the walls of the cavern for entrance. From the stifling air, I felt that we must be in a cone-shaped cave, all the time going towards its apex. Buna Vere knelt down and crawled outward through the exit, I following her example. Only the faintest light peered through to guide us. My brave little leader crept forward until she had almost emerged from the darkness.

"Now hold for your life," she whispered warningly; "and follow close." She rose to her feet, and slowly proceeded. I did the same, holding to a stone ledge on one side. Our foot-path was rather narrow and uneven, but wide as compared with the bridge over the devil's stream. One step, two steps, each more cautious than its predecessor, three, four—"Hold!" she whispered again; and from somewhere, nowhere and everywhere, rushed the wind, blowing, whirling, howling, like a thousand tornadoes turned loose—like all the masses of air were in a turmoil—with thousands of demons, screaming, screeching, yelling, crying, to assist in the deafening roar. With a howl, it blew against us, almost lifting us from our feet, and had we not had the stone protection on one side, we must surely have been blown from our

footing. From whence did it come? and whither was it going? Had the keeper of the lower regions unlocked the doors and turned all his demons loose? Harder and stronger came the rushing, mighty waves of air; louder and more piercing its screeching.

For full fifteen minutes we must have been subjected to its rushing influence, when, almost as quickly as we had entered it, we emerged. Too exhausted and excited to move on for a moment, I sank to the ground.

Buna Vere gave a scream of horror. "Arise! arise! and forward!" meanwhile forcibly pulling me to my feet. "Tarry not; but come. This is the deadly Wind Cave, whose very walls are set with dead men's bones—whose very air is full of gleaming eyes that glare out of the darkness, like amber and emerald jewels from an ebony background. The ground and these rocks are poisonous; and the air is vitiated with the dying curses of murdered men. The wind blows in its mad fury, but can never take away the poison that lingers here. Feel!" and she put out her hand and touched a damp stone. "The very rocks reek with it. The earth is full of vipers that fatten on decaying flesh. We dare not linger lest we, too, become a prey to the creeping, slimy things. We ask

for a better monument than to have our bones become a setting for fiends' abode. Beware of the Wind Cave! 'Tis full of loathsome things. Could it speak, it could tell many tales not fictitious, many butcheries not pretended. I, Buna Vere, can tell much. I have seen and heard much. Buna Vere has kept counsel, but some day, child, some day she may have revenge—may cause *him* to suffer, if only in part, as she has done."

CHAPTER XXI

THE PAST RECALLED

If we want the gold from the bowels of the earth, we must delve for it. If we want to see the brilliancy of the precious stones, they must be cut and polished. If we want to see Nature in all her marvelous, wonderful effects, we must penetrate the earth, explore its caverns, and view the interior of its caves. Nature is rightly called feminine, for, like woman, she does not reveal all her charms at once. She shows us enough of her outward beauty to enchant. She gives us to understand that in her soul depths there is something more fascinating.

Nature showed Buna Vere and me the entrance to a cavern, but did not tell us of the beauties therein hidden. We entered, and, behold! she had inwardly surpassed her outward display. Rocks, cut by the action of water, and what else we know not, hung here and there, looking as though some master sculptor had tried to outdo himself in the beautiful, fantastic shapes, now almost trans-

parent in their fineness, ready to break at the slightest touch; others were as neatly and skilfully cut, but hard as adamant, hanging from the corrugated ceiling, forming miniature, reversed caves, caverns and hollows, glaciers, icebergs and snow mountains, beautiful cathedrals, with their spires and domes pointing downward instead of upward, the roofs serving as floors, the floors as ceilings.

Many of the stalactites looked as though they were endeavoring to hide away brilliant gems which, averse to being covered, peeped out here and there from the transparent formations. Water, seeping and dripping through from above, formed diamonds and pearls in necklaces and strings that would vie with the possessions of royalty. Great, sparkling, evanescent imitations of rubies and emeralds lay imbedded in the rock or idly rested on the shelving. Occasionally, a gleam of light would penetrate, causing the hanging stalactites and their many precious jewels to glint and sparkle, making one think himself in the strong room containing the hereditary diadems of a long succession of kings and queens.

As we proceeded, I saw what caused the rays of light; not the light of sun, as I had hoped, but in a corner angling far to our right, was a

fire of pine knots that crackled and blazed, emitting both light and heat. I looked at Buna Vere inquiringly, but she, not understanding the unexpressed question, answered me not. The light irradiated to all parts of this great room of Nature's architecture, flashing on the jeweled pendants and lighting up the many gems that showed blue, green, amber and amethyst in the brightness. The rays reflected on the transparent crystals disclosing the rainbow colors with all their blendings.

Near the center of the cave, a fountain played, formed by a little stream that bubbled up, sparkling and rippling awhile, for observation, seemingly, then gurgled down into the inner recesses of the earth. A crystal cup rested invitingly near on a ledge of rock, and I advanced to drink. As I drank, the same cooling liquid that had been my salvation when I lay neath the shelter of the rocks, cooled my dry, parched tongue, and I now knew that my Buna Vere had carried the life-giving beverage from here, for only here had we seen an indication of the ice-cold water I had longed for and received in my delirium. Could this streamlet, only showing itself for a moment, rippling over the stones for the space of a foot or two, be the same stream that, traveling

through the bowels of the earth, became heated almost to boiling, and formed the fabled river that led to hell? And could it be the same that bore me along in its current swifter and faster, hotter and hotter, until rescued by Lovidorosa?

But that concerned me not now. Here I was with the one I had risked much to find. Here she and I were alone in what was evidently her home. Here, the one who had risked her life over and over again to save mine, was queen, and, truly, no royal queen was more fortunate than this in her surroundings. Chairs hewn out of the rocks by the careful, skilful hand of Nature, stood at intervals around the walls. One, with a high, carved back and elaborate arms, was cushioned with velvet and brocade. Over the back of it was carelessly thrown a robe of purple velvet, lined with white satin, and bordered and embroidered with real gold.

I marveled at such riches here in this cave; but why marvel at that more than at the white satin gown that Buna Vere wore, whose train she now released from its fastenings and which swept behind her for several feet. Right regally she walked to the chair that so resembled a throne, and, holding out the purple robe to me, bade me put it round her shoulders; then, with all natural grace and mock dignity,

she ascended the few steps to her throne, grasped a jeweled scepter that stood at her right, and held sway. Catching the spirit of mischief, I bowed low before her, and kissed the hem of her robe. With assumed hauteur, she spoke:

"Courtier, arise! enough homage paid. But let each day find thee humble and obedient to my supernal will."

"O, queen!" I cried—"My queen of life and heart! My greatest pleasure is to be thy servant."

"Then act well thy part," she spoke royally; "I want no feigned humility."

I bowed. "Thou hast but to command, O, queen! Thy will is mine; thy word my immortal sway," I replied, with earnestness.

"Thy words are sweet and true and good," Buna Vere replied; "and I revere thee for them, for they hold no hidden sting. Come, be my king!" and she held out her white hand invitingly. "I would not rule thee if I could. Let me be thy servant, and whatsoever thou askest of me my greatest pleasure will be to fulfil." And throwing the robe from her own shoulders, she bade me stoop that she might cover me with it; and taking the wreath of flowers and leaves from her head, she placed

it on mine, and prostrated herself at my feet. I felt uneasy, even at the semblance of so much homage, and, stooping, I lifted her up.

She laughed merrily. "And you will not rule me?" she asked, a merry twinkle in her love-lit eyes. I smiled a response, and she, linking her arm in mine, led me to where some huge, iron-bound boxes and trunks were placed. One of the trunks she opened as though it were a mere child's toy, and, snatching from beneath a pile of heavy, rustling silks and soft velvets, a magnificent ruby velvet opera cloak, bordered with white fur, she threw it around her, and walked along by my side with regal step. I looked down at her. Her face and eyes were alight with animation; her black hair was flowing over her shoulders unbound, falling far below her waist, and the ruby color of her robe gave her exquisite complexion a ruddier glow, like the red of a ripened peach showing through its soft, downy covering; and I, be she queen or servant, was ready to pay everlasting homage to her.

She seemed to read my thoughts, for I uttered not a word. "My king, if you will it so," she said, "I am queen, but ever obedient to thy will." She made me a stately courtesy, and continued: "My liege lord, I welcome

thee to this, my own domain. All power to reign I give into thy hands. I acknowledge thy power and bow to thee."

I began to wonder at the termination of this prolonged pretense of my Buna Vere, but, seeing the childish pleasure and pride she took in playing the part, I, too, again assumed the role of royalty, and, bowing, said in answer:

"Thou dearest and best of queens! As *one* we'll reign. And may the gods help me to win and keep the love of thy dear heart. As the sweetest joy of my soul—a cherished companion for all my future—*my wife!*"

"Wife!" she shrieked, and bounded from me like a frightened deer betrayed, unusual horror in her eyes, trembling in every limb, and crouching piteously. "You mock me! Ah, child, you know not what you say. Forgive me!" And she advanced slowly toward me, with hands outstretched and pleading eyes.

I sprang to her and clasped her trembling form in my arms, smoothing away the fear, soothing and caressing her.

"Ah! now," she said softly, "this is love. But that word—that terrible word uttered by you, moved me to frenzy. If you love me, never speak it again. It opens to me avenues of horror that have long been closed. It pic-

tures again scenes that were best forgotten. *Wife!*" she hissed; "*wife!*" and her eyes shot hatred and revenge. "A word created solely for the ruin of maidens—a word that, under its promised protection, sends yearly thousands of souls to hell."

She sprang from me, uttering scream after scream, until the cave, with its many rocks, and its adjoining caverns, echoed and re-echoed her cries. "O, God, God! must I again suffer?" She knelt with upturned face and with hands clasped in agony over her breast as though she would still forever its beating, while I in vain tried to lift her to her feet. "God, now in my renewed agony, help me as thou hast done. O, help me to endure—if thou seest I am not too unworthy. Wilt thou not in mercy close again the opened channels of sin and remorse, and make me once more unconscious of the past? In the keenest of joy, dear Father, I am again brought to thee by the specter of the past. Could it be that my heart was even momentarily weaned away from thee? If so, thou knowest, and hast punished me as I deserve. But, dear, kind, merciful Father, if it be thy will, close, close again the fountain of my heart —seal it with thy love—help me to cover it with indifference—or, if it be that I must be con-

scious, help, oh! help me to endure with patience. A penitent sinner pleads, O, Father of all Heaven—one who is sorry, so sorry for all misdeeds—only show her how she may atone —atone——"

The beautiful head with its wavy mass of glossy, raven hair, drooped lower and lower until she fell at my feet. With the cords of my heart strained almost to breaking, I lifted her and carried her gently to the large trunk from which she had so gleefully drawn the robe that now covered her, and, making her a bed among the queenly garments, I laid her tenderly down. The perspiration stood in great drops on her forehead. Her hair was damp with it. Her hands were cold and her face was clammy. I could detect no pulse. I rubbed her hands and forehead, but all to no purpose. I covered her over, shedding tears thick and fast, each one of which seemed a drop of blood wrung from my heart.

My Buna Vere! To think that she was so happy, so full of life and joy, and I, by one careless word, had changed that pleasure into intensest grief and agony. What sad scenes the word must have recalled! What agony endured! Some great, incomprehensible sorrow had fallen to her under the cloak of that

word which, to me, is closely linked with "mother." The word that some cherish above all else, was, to her, filled with anguish.

Great God! can it be that this noble woman has bent beneath the cross of "mother" and has not worn the crown of "wife"? Is that the secret of the now unconscious Buna Vere? Ah, dear child! how gladly I would have you wear the crown bestowed by me, whereon is written in bright, glowing letters, "Wife"! Dear Buna Vere, naught that your past has brought you could change my love. Sleep on, sweet Buna Vere! When God wills that you wake—when the life-blood again returns to these cold, clammy hands—when the heart beats once more—when these beautiful dark eyes again smile on me with heavenly love, may your past anguish have faded from your mind, and may you live to understand the all-powerful love I bear you, and your future be of peace and joy. Wake soon, Buna Vere, for every moment is torture to me; but I will gladly endure if, in your trance, you know not grief. When you awake, may your dear heart again be filled with love, wherein not one shadow of sorrow can enter. Truly, the grim specter of despair ever lingers near happiness, waiting to throw his shadow over all, and cloud supreme joy.

CHAPTER XXII

A FIGHT FOR SUPREMACY

Watching and waiting! Every moment an age! every day a century! But, after all, Time is relenting; he at last brings the moments down to their limit; the seconds become as fleeting as before; and the days and nights are as ever in days and nights agone.

Buna Vere awoke! The sun shone again! The hours sped swiftly by, finding and leaving my darling aided during the interval. But, instead of the bright, happy expression that had constantly flitted over her face, she was now thoughtful, almost sad at times, as though trying to solve a problem that obstinately refused to be solved. She was kind to me, oft-times even affectionate; but always after a display of love, she seemed to be even more reserved than formerly. In some way, she appeared to realize that I was not what she had thought me. At times, she caressed me with an earnestness that was winning in its abandon and innocence—at once child-like and maternal. Again, she would sit near me for

moment after moment, sometimes affirming, other times vehemently denying, by a shake of her bowed head.

I saw that any demonstration on my part would be folly. I loved her—no one knows how much—unless it be that each has realized a first, strong, powerful, consuming love that opens one's eyes to a realization of every change and every mood of the beloved. Buna Vere was struggling for light. I held her hand, and tried to ask for assistance, but I had never known God—had cared little to know—and I was powerless to mediate. But, from my dear one's actions, I knew that she was close, very close to the Great Interpreter and his ministers, and through them she would gain the light that would lift the clouds from her mind. So many years, she said, she had lived here, all alone with her God, or with the specters that haunted her; and, if the latter be true, how had she kept any part of her reason? Day after day alone! Night followed night, and found her still alone with her thoughts! It might be that love alone had knit together the dividing reason and the breaking heart.

We were now in the open air much of the time. With almost superhuman effort, I had raised the old boat of MacFayden's that was

filled with its weight of gold, jewels and water. The gold and jewels we carried into the cave, and hid them in a deep recess of a rock opening from the cave where the fountain played, and stowed them away with countless other gems of priceless value and packages containing a king's ransom. The former occupants gleamed and sparkled and glittered by the light of a torch, as we pushed them aside to make room for the recent additions.

For oars, I used pieces of boards whittled down with my knife. From morning till night, we rowed around the island where fancy dictated, or, hand in hand, roamed across its sands, sat beneath the trees, or hunted eggs on the beach. One day in our wanderings we saw something that, had it not been for a past experience, I would doubtless have passed by with little or no notice; but Buna Vere was startled almost beyond control. Remains of a recent camp-fire were seen, with many fresh footprints in the sand. Two—three—four boats had been moored, and each one contained we knew not how many men; we could only guess.

"*He* has come! *he* has come!" shrieked Buna Vere. "After all these years he has come again!" One scream followed another in quick

succession and she tore her hair in agony. Her face and lips became colorless. Her dark eyes emitted flames of fire like living coals. "For once he has kept his word; but list!" And she bent toward me earnestly and confidingly, and whispered as though afraid someone else might hear—"A knife here will end this life ere I again fall into his hands." And she drew forth a dagger that glittered in the sunlight.

"No, Buna Vere, no! Trust me to protect you. Whoever comes to take you, walks over my dead body. Only trust me!" I pleaded.

She looked lovingly at me; then her mood changed, and she burst out laughing. "We will fight as one!" she said—"we will fight as one—and, if we die, *we die as one!*"

"We die as one!" I repeated.

"He has not come alone, though. See! as many as a dozen are here. But we will fight—fight!" She pushed her sleeves up above her dimpled elbows, her face o'erspread with defiance. "This body will have shed all its life-blood ere they take us, and, bah! what cares *he* for a *dead* body? It will not respond. He will only kick it to one side and curse it for its want of warmth. But, come! we must not tarry. They have not wandered far, but are

even now looking for the entrance to our cave. Let's away, away!"

She ran before me with the speed of a fawn. She went in the very direction she had gone on that day when the bullet from the enemy's gun grazed her arm and left a scar in the white flesh. With both hands, she pushed back the sliding rock that served as a door, and stepped down, beckoning me to follow. Just as we were drawing the door over the opening again, a whirring sound told us only too plainly that a bullet was landing not far away. We heard faint cries, and knew that we had been discovered, and further knew that our enemy was coming nearer and nearer.

Buna Vere almost flew, so light and swift was her step, to where she alone knew were guns and ammunition in a shelter of a rock. She smiled faintly as she gave into my hands a gun that I instantly recognized as my own—the one I had missed when I had been nursed by my, then unknown, angel.

We hardly knew where our enemy would attack us first; but attack they would. My companion said little, only hurried here and there, making what preparations she could. There were only three ways, she gave me to understand, that the intruders could enter the

cave—one through which I had first entered, but from which I was perverted by the accident that threw me into the stream; the second entrance was through the fatal Wind Cave; and the only remaining one was the way that Buna Vere and I had just entered.

Of the three ways, we felt positive only two would be chosen—perhaps only one—for we well knew they would never risk the impassable Wind Cave, if they knew of its existence; and I, for one, felt sure they knew. Were they a part of MacFayden's pirate band, they must certainly know some, at least, of the cave's secrets—its jewels, gold, and plunder; and, perhaps, and my heart quaked with dread, they knew, too, of the existence of Buna Vere. Was it for her they were coming? I did not know; I could not tell; but, doubtless, she believed *he* was one of the band.

We paid no heed to fortifying ourselves on the Wind Cave side; but the sliding door of rock we securely fastened with the heavy chain and strong lock that had been put there when the door was first formed—by whose hand we knew not; perhaps MacFayden's himself. That done, Buna Vere showed me the entrance on the other side, around and about which we piled stones as heavy as we could move.

With a woman's wit, she piled before this a number of pine knots, and set them ablaze.

I gave a cry of dismay at this act. "You do but lead them to us, Buna Vere!"

"Not so," she answered; " 'twill cut off their entrance from that way, for, think you they expect to fight fire? Then do we want to die in the dark, if die we must? No! we must see our enemy, and fight to the death, for Buna Vere is a demon when aroused—yea, a thousand of them—for she knows it is a struggle for her freedom. Ah! will the dogs never down?"

We heard yelling and cheering above and around us, sounding like mere echoes from a thousand throats. Buna Vere looked at me with a mingled expression of terror, hatred and revenge. She had again fastened her long, satin train up so that it would not hinder her movements. Around her waist she had strapped a belt filled with cartridges. On either side of her hung a pistol; and in either hand she held one. The glow from the pine knots lit up her face with a radiant, yet fearful, light. I knew that in her throbbing, beautiful body was not fear, but hatred—a fight to the death ere she fall. She needed not my assistance, but I hers. Seeing her so well

armed, I made as if to reach for one of her guns, but quick as thought she turned to her left, and there in a crevice of a rock adroitly concealed, were rifles primed to the touch. I nodded, and we waited.

We had not long to wait now, for nearer and nearer our enemy came. We knew the fastening of the sliding door would not long deter them, for they were using all their force against it. Balked! We gloried for only an instant, however, and the few moments' respite was followed by a crash and a roar of fiendish delight. They were blasting.

Crack! bang! Buna Vere's guns spoke, and each time brought forth a blood-curdling oath from the two foremost intruders. My guns rang out almost instantly, but my nerves were less steady than the lovely girl's by my side, and the bullets merely wounded a third man who, like an injured animal doubly incensed, sprang down the steps. Steady—aim—fire! Not much time for accuracy; but Buna Vere needed no aim to give effect to her bullets. One pirate after another fell before her relentless fire. As a pistol was emptied, she threw it to one side, and took another.

"*He* will get two bullets—two," she whispered; "to make doubly sure." Her great,

black eyes, black as the shadows of the rocks where the glow of the fire did not penetrate, but radiant as polished ebony lit with coals of living fire, flashed the intense feeling she could not speak.

With all of our rapidity, bearded, tawny, fiendish men were fast entering the cave. With a fierce cry of rage, they saw that the girl was not alone; furthermore, that she had a champion, and a desperate one, too, if it served his turn so to be. Two great, burly fellows sprang at me with a growl like a hyena exhuming its prey; but a blow from the butt of my gun felled one, followed quickly by a shot from one of Buna Vere's pistols that sent him into the shadow of death. His place was taken by another who, by a side movement, grasped my arms from behind and pinioned them to my side. The third had his gun leveled at me, but Buna Vere knocked that from his hands. He then grasped a long, dangerous looking knife, and, cursing with every breath, would have plunged it deep into her brave heart—coward that he was!—but my feet were free, and I gave him a kick in the abdomen that doubled him up like a closed knife.

I wrenched one hand loose from my assailant, and he and I were soon engaged in a hand

to hand fight which, on his throwing me violently to the earth, at once became a wrestling match. I fought like a tiger, and was soon on top; but I had a tiger to deal with. But I was young and strong, and my assailant, though doubly strong in his youthful days, no doubt, was little match for me. For once, if never again, I was thankful to my guardian who had insisted upon my course in college where, though I disappointed him in theology, I gained a knowledge of athletics that now stood me well in hand. My enemy fought well for a time, and cunningly as an Indian. Twice he would have stabbed me had I been less quick. Alternately, each was on top, then underneath. The light from the pine knots flashed like glow-worms across our faces and lighted up the recesses of the rocks, filling them with brilliance, only to withdraw the beams, leaving all darker than before.

The now unequal struggle could not last long. My enemy was down, and I had my hands grasped fiercely about his throat, closing tighter and tighter. His face grew blacker than before; his eyes protruded; his tongue lolled out like that of a tired, thirsty dog. I, in my fiendish ferocity, would have soon ended his life, had I not heard the whisper: "Hold!

would ye kill a defenceless man?" *The voice was that of Lovidorosa!* My hands relaxed, insane hatred left my mind, and I sprang up from the dying man's breast to greet my thrice welcome visitor.

I saw no one but my beautiful girl lying prostrate, her white gown stained with blood. She was bleeding profusely from a cut in the wrist; but that was the only wound. I took my handkerchief, and, running quickly to the fountain, wet it, then washed her face and hands, and bound up the cut. As I stopped the blood, she groaned and opened her eyes; but I had no time to tarry. Dead and wounded were lying all about us; and I saw what I had failed to realize before, in the selfishness of my own combat, that my little champion, though brave and fearless, was far outnumbered, and her strength, all but exhausted, had given way with her wound. The men had overpowered her, and entered the cave.

Some six intruders who were, as yet, unwounded, were now busily engaged in removing the rocks from before the other entrance, that their recruits might join them. They made ready to extinguish the fire, but one of their number, seeing the folly of this, protested. His suggestion was obeyed, and they, with

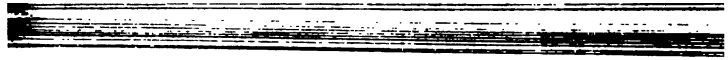
their clubs and rifle barrels, pushed the burning embers away from before the opening. Instantly, a dozen more men entered, fresh for battle, eager and revengeful. When they saw how few were the members remaining, they dashed forward, here and there, looking for the enemy; but they were blinded with the light.

I had my rifle leveled to fire, when Buna Vere whispered: "Stay you here; I will meet them."

"You!" I gasped.

"Yes; trust to me. Lie you here in the shadow by this man. If I need you, I will call; but come not else. Remember: come not else!" And she walked briskly forward to meet the intruders.

"Come not farther on my domain! I am queen here"



CHAPTER XXIII

BUNA VERE'S STORY

With cries of delight, two or three of the younger men sprang forward to meet Buna Vere. "A witch of beauty! MacFayden's prize! and now mine!" said one, more bold than the rest, as he advanced and laid one hand on her arm.

Buna Vere shook off his hold, and still advanced. When within a few feet of the late comers, she paused. "Hold, ye men!" and her clear voice rang out in echoes through the cavern. "Come not farther on my domain! I am queen here——"

She was interrupted by brutish laughter of derision and contempt. She seemed not to notice the interruption, only continued with even more firmness than before:

"He who sets one foot farther into this cave —my kingdom—unless by my invitation, dies like a dog."

Instantly, several guns and knives were ready for action; and I, who was watching every movement, would have rushed to her res-

cue, but I knew it would be the height of folly. I would only imperil her life, as well as my own; when, by doing as she bade me, I could render her assistance when more needed.

"For shame! ye who call yourselves men. To offer violence to a woman! See! I am only one against ye all. I am unarmed, defenceless, and at your mercy; but are ye brutes enough to take advantage of the weak and powerless? An animal in its lair would not do worse. Come, tell me why ye enter here against my wishes. Tell me why ye intrude yourselves upon me. My word is law here——"

One man, bold and defiant, stepped forward. Every movement was contempt. His bronzed, bearded face shone in the light. His little eyes glittered like those of a snake. Each hair of his eyebrows stood out like a porcupine quill. "Enough of such rot, harlot! Your word is law where lives no one to obey; but think you that an honest man would heed the wishes of old MacFayden's mistress?" And his lips curled with hateful superiority.

Hardly had the words left his lips, however, when Buna Vere leaped at him, and with all the power she could assume—wounded dignity and honor aiding in her strength—she gave him a ringing blow on the mouth that sent him

reeling backward. He gave a cry of rage, and sprang at her like a panther; but he was instantly grasped and held by two of his companions who had more shame than he.

"This from *you!*" And Buna Vere's face changed from deepest red to white, in her fury. "You call yourself honest! Bah! and ye would have bought my honor with a bauble! But 'twas not for sale."

"No," said the man, and would have continued, but a blow over the head from one of his comrades kept him quiet.

"This from you!" continued the girl. "And before these, your men! You have impressed them with what is false; and now I may speak a word in my own defense, may I not?" The rough men, some smiling, some sober, nodded assent. "Many years ago, men, a young and beautiful maiden lived happily with her indulgent father in a little hut on an island that was heaven to them both. A mother, this child of twelve summers had never known. Her fond father was her only parent—kind, loving and beneficent—amply filling the place of father and mother, too. The maiden's wish was his law: they were happy from morning till night.

"But as a little cloud portrays the storm, so was a cloud forming and rising in their heaven

of blue. The government established a light-house on that island—and appointed a keeper. This keeper soon made himself a friend to the father and child, being suave and considerate. Time passed, and an attachment was formed for him by the little maid of a dozen years—a fatherly feeling, only slightly different from that held for her own parent.

"A year or more passed in seeming pleasantness; then came the blow! One morning the fond parent was found dead in his bed! Killed while he slept, by the cowardly hand of an assassin! The light-house keeper was now the only comforter of the unhappy child; and is it any wonder that she grew even fonder of him than before? Try it yourselves, brave men, and see how tender your heart will grow toward one who is kind to you in sorrow.

"But, better had this maiden taken a viper to her breast, and warmed it, only to have it turn and sting her, than to have trusted this keeper. But childhood is thoughtless and confiding, sirs, and no thought of suspicion flitted through the little one's mind. One day she was lured here—here to this very cave—by the promise of jewels finer than she had ever dreamed of, and beautiful, costly robes of velvets and satins. She was not disappointed;

but she paid for them with her honor and liberty. Ask yourselves, men, who was more to blame—that child not yet budding into womanhood, innocent and guileless? or that man of two score years or more, experienced and sinful? Ask yourselves, have you daughters of your own, how many moments would ye hesitate to kill such a man as that there"—and she pointed her white hand fearlessly at her former accuser—"did he forcibly deprive your child of her honor, under the pretence of undying affection, and lure her on by promises of wealth untold, that glittered from every corner of this cave?"

The men glanced eagerly around. "Ah! 'tis not here," she murmured significantly; "but, instead, a demon lurks where every jewel rested. That demon"—and she again waved her hand at the pinioned pirate who slunk lower, and lowered his eyes—"is one who, because a condition, not of my own making, had been brought upon me, thought I had lost all honor, and would accede to his desires. Because I refused with all the diginty and pride of womanhood, he has planned revenge. He has lied to you, and humiliated me before you who, I see, have not lost all honor. As I grew to womanhood, men, I understood more; and

I now know that the father of my murdered child was also the murderer of my father—and the would-be murderer of myself! Now tell me why *he* is not here?"

"MacFayden?" said one. "We know nothing of him. He has not been at his post for months."

Buna Vere shrieked in her delight. "Then he is dead!" she cried exultantly. "Dead! Oh, ye gods, what glorious work the fiends have done! Burn him, torture him, Satan, as he has tortured my soul. Give him the unquenchable fire that will curl and twine about him, and yet die not. Heat the fire to everlasting heat, oh! ye prince of hell, and torture him—torture him, even as I have been tortured." One demoniacal laugh followed another in quick succession, causing the men to recoil in horror. Some turned and escaped as they had come; others crouched, terror-stricken, behind rocks and in shadows; others, braver, stood their ground; but, even the most courageous ones were subdued with terror, which showed alone in their livid faces.

"Burn, hell, burn!" cried the girl. "Oh! prince of darkness, heat thy oven hotter and hotter for the reception of one who, in deeds if not in name, is greater than thou! Fiends,

laugh! mock him! So mocked he me when I reproached. So laughed he at my ravings, swearing that I had my deserts. Give him his deserts now, ye attendants on the king of evil, and let him feel what I have felt. Let him bear what I have borne; and I, his victim, will be happy. Let the fire lick and caress his lips, and in its warmth sear them and parch them that they may never utter that abominable word 'Wife' again. O, Satan, fill his heart and soul with anguish and despair that will crush and weigh him down, yet not destroy. Destruction is too good for him; and annihilation there is not. Parch his tongue, oh! unquenchable fire, till he cry out for a cooling liquid; but answer not his prayers—he who never prayed for aught but self in all his wretched life.

"While his tongue parches and blisters and cleaves to the roof of his mouth, I will hear his moans, and will sit here in the fall of this laughing, rippling water, ice-cold, and laugh, laugh till the very winds will carry to the sentinels of his oven my delight. My soul, blackened as it may be, will commune with his pitch-black one, only to remind him of the past, of the ruin he brought upon me, of the many murders committed—ah! ye imps, 'twill keep

thee busy to tally them all. Methinks thou wilt grow weary in the count, and ask for relay after relay; but I will laugh, laugh as he pays the penalty for each one separate and distinct.

" 'Tis sinful to have a heart of adamant as mine is; but whose, pray tell me, is the greater sin? Mine is the result of another's crime—a consequence of that crime. Ye men, listen! Ye fiends in hell, hearken! I, Buna Vere, am an even mixture of love and hate. All the hatred contained in my body, in my heart, soul and mind, is centered on the fiend who worked my ruin, who, through a pretense of affection, deprived me of *life*.

"But now listen! God in Heaven will bear witness—God, the Fountain-Head of love, with which all love connects as tributaries —that as powerful as my hatred for the prince of fiends is, just so powerful and all-absorbing is my love for my child—none the less my child because the devil was its father—no less a part of me than if it had been born of a worthy father—none the less bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh—but just as much the star of my life as though it had been born in wedlock. Ah! ye men, mark well what ye do ere ye sow the seed ripe for fruitage; though

ye may forget the bud, still it is as much a part of the mother's heart and soul as though it were conceived under legitimate conditions.

"That child—that laughing, prattling, cooing child that loved me with almost supernatural devotion, was torn from my arms, and cast away—murdered—murdered! Think you, sirs, I have forgotten that heart cry, that wail that thrills my being through and through, and will ever thrill it, arousing all my hatred, all my revenge to be centered on that murderer? He who trifles with Buna Vere, does so to his own death. I will laugh, laugh, till all the fiends carnate and incarnate join with me.

"Ah! rippling water, laugh on. Flow over my hand so; but not one drop of your crystals will cool his tongue—not a drop will touch his parched lips, till it is heated a thousand million times to blister and work ruin. Flow on, gentle water; laugh, and I will laugh with you. Your laugh is that of a child, innocent and full of joy; but mine is that of a fiend. There is no harmony—none. See!" And again and again that sound which, in its lack of mirth, could hardly be called laughter, rang out—a wild, shrill, piercing cry that once more set the pirates' hearts to quaking.

But I saw they were not longer to be dallied with. Buna Vere must have divined it, too, for, after a moment of thoughtfulness in which her mood changed perceptibly, she raised her penetrating eyes, and asked, in a softly modulated voice, but very earnest, "Again what seek ye?"

One man spoke: "The jewels and gold that's hid here—the fruit of MacFayden's sowing."

A quiver shook Buna Vere's frame. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. MacFayden sowed and reaped. How expect you to reap what another has already garnered before you? And do ye desire to reap as he has done? If so, ye will find your reward there"—and she pointed downward—"there in hell! Ye will garner while the fiends wield the sickle. Follow him there!" She turned away, but three or four men sprang to her and held her fast.

"Not so easy, my girl. 'Tis no affair of yours what crop we gather. Show us where the gold is. If not, damn you——"

"What?" she asked defiantly. "If not, what then?"

"Ye will follow old MacFayden through the Wind Cave!"

"What know ye of the Wind Cave? Come,

pretty lad, ye speak of things ye know not. What of the Wind Cave?"

"Enough of this, harlot! or we give you a double-quick header to hell." A half dozen knives glittered in the light, but, as she turned her dark, beautiful eyes on her assailants, the knives were replaced.

"I pray you, men, do not attempt force; for I am queen here. I have legions of attendants ready to come at my bidding; and ye would be as one against them." Some of the men looked around, and prepared defense; others disdained to look, and moved threateningly toward the imprisoned girl. "Ye are blind, men; your eyes are holden. My courtiers and warriors are invisible to your sight——"

She did not finish her sentence, for she was overpowered by rough, burly, heartless robbers. Two or three only held aloof. Buna Vere struggled fiercely, but they were choking and binding her. I sprang to my feet and was on the point of hastening to her assistance, with rifle leveled, when her voice rang out: "For shame, men! hold! Ye came for booty; why bind and gag the one who alone knows the secret? Away! and I will give ye what ye seek. I will lead ye to the place where the treasure is. Who will help me?"

"I! I! I! I!" four voices sounded; all young men. The older men protested, and still treated her with violence.

The four who offered aid, she designated to watch the entrance lest some spies creep upon them. To the others: "Ye will come with me, for the reward will amply repay you. MacFayden was not idle, brave men, and it will require all the strength you can summon to bring back the treasure from its hiding-place. Stay you there, attendants, and tell all intruders that they who use force on Buna Vere do so to their death. Now, come with me. Come quickly and a sight that will fill you with delight awaits you. Come." Loosing herself, she sprang away. Some of the men followed her instantly; some laggardly; others not at all. She paused. "This is the way to the treasure. Look! here is the golden key." She held up a key that was fastened to a chain around her neck. "Now, will you come?" Before she realized it, they were almost upon her, attempting to take the key. But like a deer, she leaped away, leading, they following, maddened by the hope of rich treasure.

On toward the fatal Wind Cave she went, they following thoughtlessly. I crept along in the shadow, watching her every movement. A

misstep, and Buna Vere would be gone; but she was as fleet and sure of foot as a mountain elk. Over the rocks—down the incline—she was crossing the bridge over the Wind Cave!

"On, on, men!" she urged. "Once here, I give the key into your hands. I am queen, and all my riches are yours." They madly followed. "Careful!" she called. "Cling tighter! tighter yet. The road to wealth is ofttimes slippery and perilous. Careful, men, careful!" And they, obedient to her behest, went cautiously. All, every man now was on the bridge. Would it stand the strain? Buna Vere was crossing—was over—when crash! with a terrible deafening roar that filled every nook and corner with echoes of dismay, the bridge parted in the center. Down, down the men went, into the fatal Wind Cave, filled already with cries and curses of victims, their shrieks uniting with those of other haunting spirits. The fierce wind moaned a requiem for the pirates deep down in the Wind Cave, beyond the help of human hands—lured to their death by the queen of the cave who had now put the impassable Wind Cave between herself and me.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN IMAGE OF STONE

Gone! Gone beyond my help! Buna Vere had severed all connection between us, now that the bridge had fallen. I was powerless. As well might I have been an infant, so helpless I was. She promised to call me, and she did not. Why could she not have told me of her plans and let me run the risk instead of herself? But she would not, fearing, with a quick woman's wit, that I might oppose her, or, if helping her, would bungle matters so that I would be worse than no assistant at all. She had accomplished her plan—and alone—if plan it was. But I could scarcely believe that Buna Vere, kind, loving, affectionate Buna Vere—could give vent to so much hatred. Her soul was bitter, however, and had been embittered by years of torture and persecution; and I could not blame her.

A woman's sensibilities are beyond the power of most men to comprehend and appreciate; and, failing to find responsive sympathy among men, is not that the secret of their close

living with God and His angels? Is not that the reason they are more worshipful, more devotional than man? I leave that for some greater philosopher than myself to solve; but even the great philosophers bungle at the solution, for much learning has encased them in a cloak of selfishness that shuts out the warm, loving, divine influence of gentle woman. Doubtless we must needs wait until we enter another condition with clearer comprehension, where, mayhap, we will find Love to be the answer to all knotty problems.

Here I was on one side of the Wind Cave that, to my knowledge, had but the one foot-path—and that was gone! If there were others, they were far more dangerous than the one that was now but a memory; and God pity Buna Vere if she attempted to cross! I could only wait and hope that all would be well. With a deep sigh, I turned my back on the perilous gulf, but ever and anon looking over my shoulder, expecting to see or hear something; but nothing. She would call—she would call if she needed me. Yes: that was it. She had not called; she had not needed me. What could I do but slink along in the shadow of the rocks, and wait her return—if return it should be.

As I walked away, I stumbled over an object that impeded my progress. I arose, but in attempting to turn aside, was again thrown to the ground. The object, whatever it was, rolled a little, and I, more by the sense of touch than sight, saw that it was a very peculiarly shaped rock. I rubbed my hands over it, and found it very uneven on one side, and, horror of horrors! much resembling a human form, but tiny like a child.

With mingled fear and hope, I dragged and pushed the rock along until the light could fall more directly upon it. It was—Great God!—it was a child! a human shape moulded in stone! There were the features—the nose, mouth and chin, all perfect, and of almost Grecian classicality. There were the eyelids of stone closed over the eyes that, by their drawn curtains, were deprived of their stare. The tiny arms and hands were rounded and perfectly formed. One arm was lifted to the face; the other hand clasped—oh, ye horrors!—something in its effort to protect itself. The little nails were turned into the flesh, but so perfect! so horribly perfect!

I could have flown in my uncanny terror. I had found an Egyptian mummy; but without its wrappings. I had found something that,

despite my fears, had a great fascination for me. How had it come here? Ah, truly indeed did the Cave of the Wind waft cries of murdered ones! This little child, no doubt, had mingled its cry with others, a cry that God, if he be right and just, would hear and avenge—a cry pitiful and pleading; not heeded, but stilled—a cry that, as it was wafted along by the tornado of the cave, would arouse sympathy for a child murdered—cut down in perfect health, as the beautifully rounded arms, legs, hands and full face showed.

Farther and farther into the light I brought the only earthly reminder now of some dark deed that was meant to be covered by the blackness of the cave's depths, and whose cry was intended to be drowned in the whirling, howling wind that dashed through the cave; but it was not willed so. The image was here, perfectly preserved in stone—as perfect in every detail as though the child were merely asleep after an overtaxing play—a cold reminder of a once living, innocent babe—as innocent in death as in life. No confession could come from its cold, marble lips. No love arise from that stony heart, and be reflected through those now closed eyes. No more recognition; but all was stone—stone! Nature had done

her work well, and preserved for the eyes of others, the cherub of which she was proud. She could not let the little form crumble into dust without making one last effort to keep it; and her embalming fluid had accomplished its purpose. The earthly image was preserved, but how cold! how stony! how unearthly quiet! how uncanny! Why was it left thus to haunt others with its presence? to appeal to their hearts for aid when they were powerless? Why, after a season of secrecy, had it again come to light? Better, far better, it seemed to me, had you, Mother Nature, permitted this tiny body to return to earth, and bright, pretty flowers spring up where it mouldered.

But, for the sake of what it had once been, for the sake of the love with which it had once glowed, and which I hoped it had received, despite its untimely death, I would cherish it and care for it for the sake of humanity whose charge it now was. I would bring it farther into the light, and would guard it; and, if Buna Vere returned, her loving, sympathetic heart would suggest the proper course to pursue. If she did not return, I would perform the last rites, and hide the pleading face from the sight of the world forever.

And when the stone decayed, perhaps some-

where, somehow, an image not of stone, but of life eternal, would form in another and kinder world; and the tiny, perfect form that Nature appreciated enough to form in stone, would have life again, and live and breathe and love, and throb with joy and delight; but not sorrow, oh, ye gods, no! Why bring a moment's sorrow to an innocent child? They have not sinned: they were not born in sin. Why should they suffer for the crimes of others? Why should they be the victims of hatred and revenge? Revenge! A sweet, cooing child the victim of revenge! Yet what else was this—this image? Revenge that had recoiled on the avenger, and, though dead, yet lived!

CHAPTER XXV

MAKE THOU THY PEACE

The sentinels on guard became uneasy as moment after moment passed, and Buna Vere did not return. The moments left their shadows in the past and became quarter hours, and even half hours in the present. The present reached out and united with the future, forming hours. The sands of time rolled on, and still no Buna Vere.

The sentinels looked at one another and wondered. They knew not where their companions had gone and what delayed their return. They wondered if they, too, were lured into a trap; but four, strong, brave, if barbaric, men could surely defend themselves against anything, unless—Why did the girl look so wild? They should have imprisoned her, and searched for the treasure until they found it. They had trusted to their leaders—older heads, and more experienced—but they wondered if this self-same experience had not made them careless. This girl was surely a witch! a beautiful, fascinating, alluring witch! As ever, men who

follow the sea, either as pirates or honorable tars, are superstitious; and these well-armed young men quaked with fear in their imaginings. They could not understand all that Buna Vere had meant, but it was threatening and, somehow, uncanny.

They were chafing under the delay. The fire was growing dim. One moved forward cautiously, and almost timidly I thought, and threw another pine knot on the fire. The flames leaped up caressingly, and sent out volumes of black smoke that found an exit without filling the cave. The pine emitted radiant sparks that, bright for the moment, faded away, and the log calmly blazed.

Gun in hand, each stood waiting—waiting for they knew not what. Two, tired, roamed about the cavern, peering into nooks and crevices, looking for the hidden treasure. They opened trunks and boxes, displaying fantastic mask costumes, silken and velvet robes, and dresses of every delicate hue, exquisitely trimmed in lace and fur and jewels. Their eyes gloated over this wealth as they held it up for one another to see. Reluctantly, they threw the costumes down into their hiding places again, and walked on. Their firearms hung carelessly at their sides, and they bent

their heads now forward, now sidewise, as they inspected every crevice, no matter how tiny, each moment going farther away from where I knew a quantity of gems was stored.

Hist! what was that? Quick as thought their guns were leveled. Only the merest nothing! Trembling in every limb, they laughed, and the echoes of their scornful, mirthless laughter sounded throughout the cave, ending in hollow sounds and mockery. They now looked wildly around, expecting to see a sprite of inhuman shape peering from every shadow. But, convincing each other that they four were the only occupants of the cave, they beckoned for their comrades to come; and, four abreast, they continued their explorations.

Nearer to me, and yet nearer they came. I slunk back farther into the shadows and watched their every movement. Every step now was lessening the distance between them and me. One struck his foot against a stone. Horror of horrors! I had forgotten the image in my earnest desire to watch the maneuvers of the sentinels. Another and another struck the stone as they huddled together. The thing rolled a little—it was long—it was—O Holy Mary! it was strikingly like a——

"Ha, ha, ha!" four voices laughed their con-

tempt. But the thing stared. It almost smiled! It was—— One, bolder than the others, stooped and lifted the image in his strong arms, and bore it nearer to the light, followed closely by his companions, so closely as to strike his heels as they walked. They stared fascinatedly at the stone. The glow of the fire lit up the stony features, and they saw what it was. Terrified, the pall-bearer threw his burden and ran, the three others almost outstripping him, their superstitious fears having full sway. The presence of this thing had caused that impression of being alone, yet not alone!

"Back to thy post!" a voice, hollow as the grave, commanded. For an instant, the now doubly terror-stricken men paused. The thing lived! it moved! it talked! There was no escape. The voice had penetrated its walls of stone and broken the deathly silence. They looked at the image, expecting any moment to see it walking toward them. It moved! It took on a giant form! It was filling the cave!

"Back to thy post!" They listened to the voice and tried to associate it with the petrified child; but the image persisted in lying on the ground where it had been thrown—as silent and immovable as the rocks.

"Obedience—or death!" How unearthly the voice sounded! It was not that of the stone image! It was a new terror! A terror they had no knowledge of—a presence that seemed to fill all space—so dense that it choked. They swallowed hard; they coughed nervously. Too stupefied to move, they clung to one another like frightened children.

"Make thou thy peace, oh, sinful wretches! Make thou thy peace! Thy time has come. Even now the dark-hooded, dark-robed Angel of Death knocks at thy door. Thy former leader waits at the river to escort thee to his present abode, where 'tis as a thousand furnaces were heated a thousand fold. Make thou thy peace!" Then came a loud rapping, and four terrified voices arose in supplication. Another loud rap.

"The Death Angel waits!" Into the light, stepped a figure resembling a monk in appearance, being covered completely with a black cloak and hood. Piteous, pleading supplications arose. A confession of all past sins filled the air. "Make thou thy peace!" Long-forgotten prayers were recalled; but these being mere rote, some were fitting, others not.

The men determined to make an effort to flee, and, returning to their deserted post, were

fast making their exit, when another creature in clinging, white garments barred their way. Screaming and falling over one another in their haste, they ran toward the entrance where the sliding rock once was; but the opening was now doubly enlarged, for the intruders, failing to remove the heavy door, had blasted out the surrounding rocks, and left a yawning, ragged mouth through which the light of day streamed in.

The hooded creature followed fast after them, and watched until they had taken oar, all in one boat, and were far out on the water, fighting with all strength to place as many miles as possible between them and the haunted island; doubtless congratulating themselves that they had for once outwitted Death.

CHAPTER XXVI

A STRANGE DUEL

"Hold, base intruder! What hast thou to do in ruling my domain? By what authority dost thou drive from my kingdom those to whom I have promised reward for their faithfulness to my commands?"

"Not so fast, O fair ruler of this fast departing kingdom!" and the hooded man bowed low in courtesy. "These, thy fleeing subjects, ill deserve the name of faithful. They have explored every nook and corner of this thy throne-room; but have gone empty-handed away. I, the Angel of Death, have come to claim thee, too, Buna Vere—thou fairest and most just of all queens! In humble subservience, I ask thee—Make thou thy peace!"

"And what if I defy thee, thou impersonated Death Angel? Canst thou in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, crumble this rounded form to dust? Canst thou moulder and decay this flesh, these hardened muscles that have but lately served me well? Tell me, O thou of the sepulchral voice, a voice that

speaks of the grave, of the hollowness of the sepulcher wherein men's flesh rots and bones bleach, canst thou take from me the power to *live*—the power to *think?*"

"The Death Angel demands thee, Buna Vere. The worms are waiting to feast on thy beautiful body. When thy bones are clean and dry, then arise and ask me if thou wilt live again. Truly, thou wilt desire me to complete my work."

"E'en couldst thou destroy the flesh and cause it to fall from my bones, the bones to decay and fertilize the earth, tell me, thou Death Angel, what wouldst thou have gained? Thou knowest well this body is not all, and that in some other world than the grave thou makest, I will *live*—will *move*—will *think*—will *reason!* Dost thou hope to destroy the mind—the soul? Thou mockest me; but in turn thou art mocked, for thou gainest only a partial victory, while mine is complete. Thou dost but liberate my fettered spirit, and I soar to other worlds where flesh is not an environment—where spirit is all."

"When the Angel of Death comes, he claims thee all. His wings are like a heavy mantle that fall over thee, and destroy thee. Thou art dead—dead for all eternal ages. And thou

speakest of something thou knowest not when thou babblest that thou wilt live again. Eternities will pass, Buna Vere, the beautiful, and find thee still *dead!*"

"Thou frightenest me not, O Angel of Death, even though thou shouldst be what thou seemest; for thou art but a liberator—a doorway between the two worlds through which all must pass. Thou art stationary; never canst thou enjoy the delights of Paradise. As the doorway thou must ever remain, until each and every soul has passed through to the world of spirit. Thy task is laborious and endless. If thou be what thou pretendest, tarry not long here, for others await thee. With some, thou art unwelcome; but with me, when God, the Supreme Ruler, calls, I will go—and not before! If thou hast the power to release the spirit, exert it now; but leave my reason until the last that I may watch thee at thy work—that I may see and note the decaying and dropping away of the flesh—that I may discern the passageway between the two worlds; and, perchance, I may meet some friends who, in the long, dead past, have not yet forgotten me.

"Come, thou dark angel; I am ready—aye, more than ready!" With her usual queenly

face, Buna Vere walked to her throne chair, and mounted it. "Let me but die as I have here lived—a queen; for, perchance, when I pass through the doorway of death, I may be compelled to serve instead. But with that thou hast nothing to do. Come, now, use thy power—if power thou hast."

The hooded creature who had been awed by Buna Vere's words and actions, advanced toward her and raised his hands; but as he did so, she caught sight of his features, and springing up like a tigress, she tore from his face and head the cape that had ingeniously formed a hood. "Thou impostor! thou hypocrite! thou viper! But a moment since, thy life was spared, not by a Death Angel, but by one who had thee in his power; and now thou thoughtest to make me thy tool! But sharp, keen eyes are mine. Thou didst thy part but poorly; and now thou must pay the penalty."

"What penalty dost thou pronounce, Buna Vere? Thou and I art alone. Curb thy tongue that thou askest not too much."

"Were we a thousand times alone, my heart would not fail me. Of thee I would ask as much as though an army stood behind me to do my bidding."

"But thou art alone!" said the one whose life

I had spared a few short hours before. " 'Tis a struggle between us for supremacy. Which will win? If I am victor——" he laughed sneeringly— "and thou art wounded unto death, thou must leave this cave and all its contents to me."

"And if I win?" said Buna Vere; and I blessed her for the confidence in her voice.

"If thou win"—another contemptuous laugh, for which I wanted to choke him; this time for eternity—"I will be thy willing slave, and do thy every wish. The weapons?"

For answer, Buna Vere stepped to a locker and produced two swords which she unsheathed and handed them to her opponent for his choice. The blades glittered in the light, and the jewels in the hilts gleamed like red and yellow eyes in the glow of the fire. I was horrified that she should undertake to fight this strong, heavy man; but she, perhaps by intuition, perchance by a glimpse of my moving figure, knew that I was approaching to what might be my doom and hers, and determined to keep me in the background.

"All ye specters and spectators unseen, remain and watch this struggle for supremacy. Ready!" She stepped back a pace. Like a flash of lightning, her sword went outward, and

striking that of her adversary, knocked his weapon from his hand. She laughed, and her laughter was accompanied by strong epithets from the chagrined opponent. "Another trial, sir knight," she said gaily. "Methinks thou must be somewhat more wary." And she picked up his sword and handed it to him.

His dark, swarthy face reddened, and he choked down his anger. Bending forward with a feint at examining the hilt, he thought to find Buna Vere off guard, and made a heart thrust; but she, wherever she may have learned her fencing, threw her shield and protected herself most skilfully. She crossed blades with him, and the clanging of the swords rang out distinctly. Foiled in his intent, he grew angrier with every movement; but his fair opponent did not fail to show her exquisite skill. Fascinated, I gazed at the rapid thrusting and shielding, the constant moving, and the earnest staring one at the other. As yet, there was no wound; but hardly had I assured myself of this, when I saw my beloved one's wet, white gown splashed with the crimson flow.

I leaped forward to have revenge, but a side glance from Buna Vere bade me stay. I saw then to my delight that it was her adversary who had suffered a cut in his left arm; but it

did not deter him. Flash, flash, like lightning streaks in a clouded sky, gleamed their blades —now straight forward, now curving, with the skill of a fencing master of the old school, when duels were so much in fashion. (But the gods be praised that those days of barbarity are almost past, and disputes are settled by the strength of the mind, not of muscles.)

I marveled more than all at the science displayed by Buna Vere, for she was an equal, if not a superior, to the one with whom she was now engaged; and he was by no means an indifferent swordsman. But Buna Vere, doubtless almost exhausted and severely tried by her previous exertions, was weakening, though still brave. She moved as gracefully and scientifically as before. Now she faced me; now her beautiful profile was visible; now her back with its mass of raven hair; not a moment losing nor an opportunity to thrust at her adversary.

However, the man's superior strength, coupled with his constantly increasing rage at being so baffled by a young and willowy opponent, was telling. More like a beast than a man, he sprang at her; and had she not evaded his heavy thrust, she would have been spitted on the blade.

The intention must have frightened her greatly, for her flushed and animated face paled almost to a death-like hue, and she reeled. Her enemy, seeing his opportunity, was at her again; but I, no longer to be detained, had him by the shoulders, and whirled him away and to the hard, rocky ground with a thud, just as he had his sword raised to plunge it into that brave and kindly heart.

"You dirty dog!" I hissed between my teeth that were set with rage. I gave him a resounding kick in the ribs that brought forth a groan. "To fight with a woman! Where is the honor you pirates boast of? You are pirates in every sense of the word—damned, dirty, devilish pirates! You old hulk! not content to fight—you would *kill!*—not openly, but foully—like a voluntary werewolf! Damn you! damn you!" I screamed, amazed in a moment afterward to hear my own voice uttering such words. He was quiet, motionless; but I cared not. I knew I had not killed him; but as I felt then I would not have cared if I had done so.

I turned to my Buna Vere who had paled and reeled, but not fallen. She had collected her senses in time to save herself from a faint; and she now leaned against the rocks that enclosed the fountain, her left hand and arm

sprayed by the rippling, splashing water; her right, from which her weapon had fallen and now lay idly at her feet, stretched downward, motionless, but covered with the blood of herself or her enemy. Her matted hair fell around her shoulders; her mouth was open, and set, it seemed; her eyes—such great, dark, penetrating eyes—were staring, staring wildly, fascinatedly.

She was powerless to move. I touched her; not a quiver! I approached nearer and tried to confront her gaze and withdrew it; but she did not change—she did not even seem to see me. She kept staring right through me, and at the object that had first attracted her attention. I did not understand then, that the picture was photographed on her mind and she did not need to look to see it: it was within her! The eyes conveyed nothing; they had already transmitted their message. Not an eyelid quivered; not a muscle trembled; not a nerve twitched.

I touched her hands; they were cold as ice! I took them in mine and rubbed them briskly. I drew her to me and chafed her temples, in which her blood moved as ice. She made no resistance, but let me draw her away from the fountain. However, I could not change her range of vision: it was fixed as in death. I

could not even close her eyes; but the mouth had closed. I was imparting warmth to her, for I felt her cold body faintly warming. Her temples throbbed. The blood had burst its icy fetters, and was now leaping through her veins.

Slowly she relaxed; now by the jerking of a muscle—by the twitching of a tiny nerve—by the bending of a finger. I looked into her face and saw an eyelid quiver; then another. With a gasp for breath—a long, deep-seated sigh that shook her whole body—she breathed. The white eyelids closed. The curtains remained drawn for some moments; then she opened her eyes again, and looked at me with a half-smile. Withdrawing herself from my embrace, she sank to the ground. She took the object of her fascination in her arms, and held it tight against her breast, the tears falling in a continuous stream down her cheeks, bathing the form that lay silent as the grave in her embrace.

I needed nothing more to make me understand: *The petrified child was Buna Vere's!*

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAST RITES

"Up, up, monster! Lie thou no longer idle! Arise, for to-day is the glorious resurrection morn! To-day, naught but gladness shall we create. Up, creature! mind not thy rosary, or whatever be thy creed. All the creeds in the universe will not find thee a place in Paradise if thou be not religious—not Christ-like. This is not the day of the resurrection of Christ—but the awakening and resurrection of Buna Vere. All these years I have been asleep—dead. I was born—I died; and now—to-day—this hour—is my resurrection. How glorious that thou canst be a witness! Arise, and bow here before me, for I would administer to thee an oath that thou wilt not fail to keep. Kneel thou here and raise thy hands and eyes toward Heaven. Thy name, that I may swear thee."

The man hesitated—tried to utter a word—and failed. He cleared his throat—made a second attempt—and second time failed.

"At other times thou couldst have recalled one of thy many names," said Buna Vere, satirically; "but in the presence of thy Creator thou dost hesitate, and thy vile tongue cannot speak the name thou worest in childhood. Let me tell it thee." The man trembled as she spoke the name of "Hartwell." "Bow thy head in assent." He bowed.

As she pronounced the name, it awakened long dormant memories in me, and I came nearer to the man that I might behold his face. Hartwell caught my glance, and for the first time looked me directly in the eyes. We had struggled together; we had fought to the death, almost; and I had intervened and prevented his murder of my loved one. I knew him not, though I tried to connect him with some long dead-past memory; but in the sinful, bronzed and hardened features I could recognize nothing that had aught to do with me or mine.

However, I saw that he recognized something; but what I could not fathom. He vainly attempted to hide his surprise by turning away his face; but I thought I noticed just the least gleam of tenderness, probably——revenge, more likely—both momentary—like the instantaneous flash of a powerful light. That Buna Vere knew his name concerned him

more now than anything else, for he could not repress a stammer of surprise.

"In the past of long ago," said the girl, "a little child overheard what has affected her life most of all. What that child had stored away in her brain, and almost forgotten, your face has recalled. The vile plot that was formed and perpetrated then, she has had cause to remember. Thou, sir, wert one of the conspirators! and thinkest thou that she has forgotten one incident? If thou failest to remember all, look at this necklace of priceless pearls that was torn by thy hands from the throat of that noble lady. Ah! thy memory has not failed thee? I knew it would not." She calmly placed inside the neck of her gown the most magnificent necklace of pearls I had ever seen—great, round, matched beauties, linked by the tiniest of gold chains, and finished with a pendant of pearls in form of a star having a large, white diamond for the center.

"Thou thoughtst a specter had spirited thy prize away. It did, sir, and I have it. It was never thine, and it will never be! Ah! I could have plunged my sword into thy vile, false heart as easily and with as little compunction as thou sent the dagger into the heart of the

beautiful owner of these pearls. I was young, then; but I have grown older, and with my years I have not forgotten the impressions of childhood. I have a champion here." And she looked at me. "Thou art only one against us; so 'twill be no use to resort to strength. In strategy, we are more than thy equals." She turned to me again. "Before I administer the oath, friend, search him, and deprive him of all weapons."

Hartwell made a movement to resist, and disclaimed possession of any means of defense. So I thought, as I searched him, until, replacing his outer cloak, my hand touched something hard, almost directly over his heart. I looked, and found there, in a carefully concealed pocket three knives that were made to close in a case—sharp, pointed and keen as a razor blade. A gleam of anger shot from his gray-green eyes, as I gave the dangerous weapons into the hands of Buna Vere.

"Bring him here!" Buna Vere commanded. I forced the man to his feet, and we followed her. She walked directly to the hiding-place of the mass of jewels, and, holding them up by the handful, let them slowly fall again, each one sending out a lustrous light as it fell to the ground, there twinkling and sparkling like a

star in the darkness. Hartwell's eyes beamed with greed and gloating.

"Millions lie with these," she said; "millions as priceless. All of these I will divide, for to-morrow's set of sun will not find me here. This cave can no longer contain me. I am resurrected—I have awakened—I am free! and this cave is no longer my home. Go thou, and at once, for the four young men, thy former companions, whom thou frightenedst from this, my domain, and bring them here to this island where the camp-fires were built. My friend and I will carry these jewels all—every one—and divide them in five heaps. One for thee, and one for each of the four. I shall not take one: they would eat the flesh from my bones. But thou, hardened in sin as thou art, art impervious to sentiment. Go! and do as I bid thee. If thou failest to bring thy companions, these jewels, one and all, will be buried far out in the sea by the setting of to-morrow's sun. Wilt thou go?" He nodded. "Bring not one other beside. Wilt thou obey in every iota? If not, the tornado of the Wind Cave will chant thy requiem ere thou leavest this island."

The man shuddered violently. "I promise," he said, with more humility than I had seen him manifest before. He looked earnestly and steadfastly into my face, almost tenderly, I

thought; then turned away. Buna Vere and I escorted him to the boat-landing, and saw him safely started. Buna Vere then turned and ran quickly to the cave, leaving me alone.

I was puzzled, doubly puzzled, at her strange actions. I was almost despairing at ever teaching her to love me as I wished. For long now, she had avoided me, had shunned and deserted me, until I was almost mad with love and despair. But in any of her moods I could have held her tight against my breast, and loved her more. The island, the cave, the rocks and the trees were all becoming doubly dear because of associations with her. But she was shy; she was not confiding; she almost hated me at times, I thought. But how I loved her! Buna Vere, tender, affectionate, loving—brave, fearless and courageous—Buna Vere, the timid woman!—Buna Vere, the daring man!

For a long time, I walked around the island alone, thinking, thinking. After to-morrow, what? She was going away—I knew not where. Where should I go? This world would be as blackest night without her—but to-morrow was the parting! Our companionship of weeks and months was ended—and she would separate herself from me—she who had become the greater part of my being. I went to the

sheltering rock where I had lain fighting with a raging fever, where *she,* my angel then, my angel now, had ministered unto me. I walked on the sands where her dainty feet had kept step with my own. I sat beneath the overhanging branches of the trees where she and I had often sat, nestling in my arms the while, or holding me close against her bosom. However, these thoughts were of little comfort to me now. She loved me then as a dream, a delusion; but now she had awakened, been resurrected, and she shunned me. No longer had she any love for me. But for *me* she had never cherished love: it was only for the one she thought me to be. Now she knew—and cared not. Her heart was encased in stone, even as the image of her cherished child.

To-morrow! yes, to-morrow! Why not to-day, and make the parting time shorter? No! that was Selfishness speaking. I would not leave her here alone. I would wait, would aid her if I could; then—to-morrow! I went to the rock where I had found some blood spots long ago, fresh from a wound in my behalf. Dear memories came back to me, and I sat and thought. A light hand touched my shoulder—light as the kiss of a zephyr, yet thrilling me through and through. I looked up.

"I need you," Buna Vere said.

I sprang up, my eyes glowing with love; but something in her face and attitude made me check my risen emotion. I followed her slowly down the steps and into the cave, and on to where the petrified child lay. She motioned me to the feet, and she lifted the head. Out through the passage-way we went again, silent as the image of stone we carried. By the sheltering rock where I had lain, there we deposited our burden.

We were shoveling out the loose, clean sand to make a hole large enough and deep enough to bury the form, when something impeded our progress. I knew instinctively what we had encountered, and so, too, did Buna Vere. Eight—nine—ten tin boxes and leathern bags, with a thousand in each, no doubt. I laid them to one side, and we continued our digging; but I was all the while thinking how near the two pirates had been to the discovery of the treasure over which I was, unconsciously, watchman for so long a time.

Not a tear fell from the eyes of the true-hearted mother as she assisted at the burial of what had once been the center of all her hopes and all her love. Wrapped in robes of velvet and ermine, she pressed one kiss on the exqui-

sitely formed lips, and drawing the robe over the stony face, we placed our burden to rest.

A light now transfigured the face of Buna Vere. She raised her eyes heavenward, and spoke in soft, gentle and confiding tones: "Thou art indeed a father, O God. Thou hast divined the desires of my soul, and hast granted them. To a child gave I birth; and through Thy merciful kindness, I have assisted at the burial of all that consisted of earth. My soul is full of gladness that this privilege has been granted me. When I come to dwell with thee, O Father, thou wilt give me my child again—not of stone, but full of the old-time love increased and purified by Thy benign influence. Until then, dear God, I thank Thee—and thine."

For a moment, she bowed over the remains, then, lifting her eyes to mine, she smiled, looking more like an angel than ever. With true Spartan courage, she began filling in the sand. When we had evened the ground again, we brought a large, flat stone and laid over the grave. We removed all traces of anything unusual and walked away, leaving the sun to act as sentinel by day, the moon and stars by night, with Time to measure the hours until the little image should be dissolved and become a part of the surrounding sands.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A JEWEL FROM THE WIND CAVE

"Maybe you never heard your mother speak of a half-brother who went away in his childhood. Well, I am the only reminder of him —his wife; for he struck the shoals several years ago, and we dry-docked him. For the sake of the past, I'll let you have my share of the swag. Keep it; I'll never bother you. No: I won't reform. I find the devil's ways just suited to my gait. He's a sort of pace-maker for me. My pals will stick by me; so enjoy yourselves for the sake of one who is too fiendish to be anything else but

The Death Angel."

"P. S.

That's not a bad girl you've got, though you'll have to watch her. She never forgets anything, and is like a broken oar-lock—always making trouble."

I read the letter to Buna Vere—a letter not badly written. Its chirography, though now

somewhat strained, still revealed traces of a fair hand and a fairer education. A woman! I had kicked a woman! No! a fiend!—a would-be murderess!—an impostor!—a pretended angel of death!—I had almost killed—the thing! I could not call it woman! It was not man! A creature masquerading in man's rags to do the dirty work of man! A pirate! a fiend! but still my kins-woman—if she spoke not falsely. And what reason would she have for telling to me an untruth? This was the one then who had murdered the lady for her necklace when she was washed ashore on the light-house island. This was the one who was in league with MacFayden, and, doubtless, had a hand in the destruction of the purity of my beloved. This, then—this unsexed creature—had been moved by the merest trifle. Or was it that her conscience had at last broken its fetters of sin, and was fighting against her methods? Doubtless, or she would not have denied reformation.

The four men were waiting. The fifth pile of jewels was still waiting. I waited, too, for a word from Buna Vere. She stood silent, and plowed her sandaled foot in the sand. The men moved toward the boat. One was in. Then the second. Then the third. And the fourth.

Anchor was raised. The jewels lay twinkling and glittering in a yellow, white, amber and ruby heap, with here and there a green, or a blue, or an opaline light glinting at us. Away the pirates were pulling——

"Hold, men!" said Buna Vere, turning questioningly to me. I nodded, blindly assenting to whatsoever she might propose. "Take thou these jewels to thy comrade. Tell her, that we joyfully bequeath them to her for her honor in fulfilling her promise. Tell her further, that we bequeath with them joy and happiness; to fully enjoy which, she will renounce her old life, and live as becomes a woman: true and upright. Tell her I forgive—I who have had reason to remember. Tell her I forgive—forgive—and for the sake of that forgiveness, ask her to do my bidding—his and mine." She looked at me with so much feeling expressed that I thought for the moment she loved me.

One man returned for the remainder of the treasure. He lifted his worn cap respectfully to Buna Vere—a feeling inspired, doubtless, by the noble actions of one whom they all had believed to be only a little above the beasts. They pulled quietly away from shore, leaving Buna Vere again shy and cold.

Moment after moment passed. The boat—the only boat remaining now—was washed upward on the beach; then it glided back again, the water gurgling, lapping, rippling the while. The beautiful girl walked nervously up and down, her thoughts busy, no doubt, with associations of the island and cave she was forever leaving. An occasional cry of a bird sounded on our ears; but still we stood, or walked, apart—and silent.

Buna Vere went to the boat and stepped in. I remained where I was. The boat moved backward and forward with its lovely cargo. With a hurt and disappointed expression, she returned to shore; perhaps for some forgotten memento, or to bid farewell to a loved spot. I would have spoken in spite of the rebuffs; but I thought best to wait—wait—wait!

I wanted to hurry the parting—and to delay it; but delay was torture to me. I determined to break the silence, and end the suspense. "Buna Vere!" I said, as I went toward her. She stopped abruptly as though the chain of her thoughts had been abruptly broken; and I had no part in them. "Buna Vere!"—and my voice trembled beyond control—"to-day is your resurrection: I am still in the grave. To-day is our parting——" I could say no more. Something welled up within me, giving

me warning that with this parting went my life.

"Parting!" she said with surprise. "Parting!" she repeated meditatively. "Ah, no! I have been resurrected, 'tis true; but you alone have accomplished it. You have shown me the best in life. Ah! would you draw me from the heights to which I have attained, and bury me again in the cold, dark and dismal grave? Would you shut out from my vision the marvelous, scintillating, illumining light of love, and plunge me again into the darkness of hatred and despair? Love has regenerated me; and you——"

"And I?" I asked, hoping, yet fearing, to have her continue.

"—have awakened that love!"

I looked eagerly at her. Her face was aglow with the words she was speaking that fell like balm on my troubled soul. The love-light was shining through her eyes, and transfiguring her whole face. I held out my arms to her. The winds chanted a love song as we glided over the waters—our hearts unspeakably full of joy and happiness. The birds flew around us as if they, too, wished us a merry journey. Buna Vere reclined in the bottom of the boat, her head on my lap, her raven tresses falling around and over her shoulders. Her beautiful

face beamed with the love she could not express.

Gently the boat glided onward, carrying us farther away from the island and the past. The future was opening to us like some long-delayed, long-desired event that was already here, yet unseen—a veil that was being lifted before our eyes, permitting us to see what had ever been in store for us. Like two innocent, happy children, we were afloat in our tiny bark on the great sea of life, unmindful of the clouds that might hang heavy over us. Our hearts and souls were full of sunshine; and all was sunshine around us. We were all in all to each other—a world within ourselves.

To my old home in the Blue Mountains we were going. There we would have a home where we could grow and expand in the light and warmth of love. There I, the wanderer, would live for all time with my beloved—my Buna Vere—who was named by a father's caprice for the fair, lost city that I had beheld in my vision. There I will live with the one who has buried her past, and who now loves, instead of hates, the name of "wife"—my jewel from the Wind Cave.

THE END